

PLAYS, ACTING  
AND  
MUSIC

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ARTHUR SYMONS







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# **PLAYS, ACTING, AND MUSIC.**







Je suis souhaité  
force et confiance  
de vive. A. Gure.

**PLAYS, ACTING, AND MUSIC: BY  
ARTHUR SYMONS.**

**NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.**



To Maurice Maeterlinck, in friendship and  
admiration.

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Most of these chapters, not quite in their present form, appeared in the *Academy* during 1902 ; some in the *Star*, during 1901 and 1902 ; and a few elsewhere. They express some of my ideas about the theatre and about music, and are not intended as a record of events. Thus I have not arranged them in chronological order, because the dates of particular performances have no longer any significance ; but I have frankly left all references to "last week," and the like, as I found them, because that will help to show that I am speaking of a particular thing, immediately under my eyes. That particular thing is sometimes of no interest in itself ; but it is my peg, and I wish it to stand firmly in its place.

The book is intended to form part of a series, on which I have been engaged for many years. I am gradually working my way towards the concrete expression of a theory, or system of aesthetics, of all the arts. In my book on "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" I made a first attempt to deal in this way with literature ; other volumes, now in preparation, are to follow. The present volume deals mainly with the stage, and, secondarily, with music ; it is to be followed by a volume called "Studies in the Seven Arts," in which music will be dealt with in greater detail, side by side with painting, sculpture, architecture, handicraft, dancing, and the various arts of the stage. And, as life too is a form of art, and the visible world the chief storehouse of beauty, I try to indulge my curiosity by the study of places and of people. A book on "Cities" is now in the press, and a book of "imaginary portraits" is to follow, under the title of "Spiritual Adventures." Side by side with these studies in the arts I have my own art, that of verse, which is, after all, my chief concern.

In all my critical and theoretical writing I wish to be as little abstract as possible, and to study first principles, not so much as they exist in the brain of the theorist, but as they may be discovered, alive and in effective action, in every achieved form of art. I do not understand the limitation by which so many writers on æsthetics choose to confine themselves to the study of artistic principles as they are seen in this or that separate form of art. Each art has its own laws, its own capacities, its own limits ; these it is the business of the critic jealously to distinguish. Yet, in the study of art as art, it should be his endeavour to master the universal science of beauty.

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## A Paradox on Art.

Is it not part of the pedantry of letters to limit the word art, a little narrowly, to certain manifestations of the artistic spirit, or, at all events, to set up a comparative estimate of the values of the several arts, a little unnecessarily? Literature, painting, sculpture, music, these we admit as art, and the persons who work in them as artists; but dancing, for instance, in which the performer is at once creator and interpreter, and those methods of interpretation, such as the playing of musical instruments, or the conducting of an orchestra, or acting, have we scrupulously considered the degree to which these also are art, and their executants, in a strict sense, artists?

If we may be allowed to look upon art as something essentially independent of its material, however dependent upon its own material each art may be, in a secondary sense, it will scarcely be logical to contend that the motionless and permanent creation of the sculptor in marble is, as art, more perfect than the same sculptor's modelling in snow, which, motionless one moment, melts the next, or than the dancer's harmonious succession of movements which we have not even time to realise individually before one is succeeded by another, and the whole has vanished from before our eyes. Art is the creation of beauty in form, visible or audible, and the artist is the creator of beauty in visible or audible form. But beauty is infinitely various, and as truly beauty in the voice of Sarah Bernhardt or the silence of Duse as in a face painted by Leonardo or a poem written by Blake. A dance, performed faultlessly and by a dancer of temperament, is as

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beautiful, in its own way, as a performance on the violin by Ysaye or the effect of an orchestra conducted by Richter. In each case the beauty is different, but, once we have really attained beauty, there can be no question of superiority. Beauty is always equally beautiful ; the degrees exist only when we have not yet attained beauty.

And thus the old prejudice against the artist to whom interpretation in his own special form of creation is really based upon a misunderstanding. Take the art of music. Bach writes a composition for the violin : that composition exists, in the abstract, the moment it is written down upon paper, but, even to those trained musicians who are able to read at sight, it exists in a state at best but half alive ; to all the rest of the world it is silent. Ysaye plays it on his violin, and the thing begins to breathe, has found a voice perhaps more exquisite than the sound which Bach heard in his brain when he wrote down the notes. Take the instrument out of Ysaye's hands, and put it into the hands of the first violin in the orchestra behind him ; every note will be the same, the same general scheme of expression may be followed, but the thing that we shall hear will be another thing, just as much Bach, perhaps, but, because Ysaye is wanting, not the work of art, the creation, to which we have just listened.

That such art should be fragile, evanescent, leaving only a memory which can never be realised again, is as pathetic and as natural as that a beautiful woman should die young. To the actor, the dancer, the same fate is reserved. They work for the instant, and for the memory of the living, with a supremely prodigal magnanimity. Old people tell us that

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they have seen Desclée, Taglioni; soon, no one will be old enough to remember those great artists. Then, if their renown becomes a matter of charity, of credulity, if you will, it will be but equal with the renown of all those poets and painters who are only names to us, or whose masterpieces have perished.

Beauty is infinitely various, always equally beautiful, and can never be repeated. Gautier, in a famous poem, has wisely praised the artist who works in durable material :

Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle  
D'une forme au travail  
Rebelle,  
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.

No, not more beautiful ; only more lasting.

Tout passe. L'art robuste  
Seul a l'éternité.  
Le buste  
Survit à la cité.

Well, after all, is there not, to one who regards it curiously, a certain selfishness, even, in this desire to perpetuate oneself or the work of one's hands ; as the most austere saints have found selfishness at the root of the soul's too conscious, or too exclusive, longing after eternal life ? To have created beauty for an instant is to have achieved an equal result in art with one who has created beauty which will last many thousands of years: Art is concerned only with accomplishment, not with duration. The rest is a question partly of vanity, partly of business. An artist to

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whom posterity means anything very definite, and the admiration of those who will live after him can seem to promise much warmth in the grave, may indeed refuse to waste his time, as it seems to him, over temporary successes. Or he may shrink from the continuing ardour of one to whom art has to be made over again with the same energy, the same sureness, every time that he acts on the stage or draws music out of his instrument. One may indeed be listless enough to prefer to have finished one's work, and to be able to point to it, as it stands on its pedestal, or comes to meet all the world, with the democratic freedom of the book. All that is a natural feeling in the artist, but it has nothing to do with art. Art has to do only with the creation of beauty, whether it be in words, or sounds, or colour, or outline, or rhythmical movement; and the man who writes music is no more truly an artist than the man who plays that music, the poet who composes rhythms in words no more truly an artist than the dancer who composes rhythms with the body, and the one is no more to be preferred to the other, than the painter is to be preferred to the sculptor, or the musician to the poet, in those forms of art which we have agreed to recognise as of equal value.





## Technique and the Artist.

TECHNIQUE and the artist : that is a question, of interest to the student of every art, which was brought home to me with unusual emphasis the other afternoon, as I sat in the Queen's Hall, and listened to Ysaye and Busoni. Are we always quite certain what we mean when we speak of an artist? Have we quite realised in our own minds the extent to which technique must go to the making of an artist, and the point at which something else must be superadded? That is a matter which I often doubt, and the old doubt came back to my mind the other afternoon, as I listened to Ysaye and Busoni, and next day, as I turned over the newspapers.

I read, in the first paper I happen to take up, that the violinist and the pianist are "a perfectly matched pair"; the applause, at the concert, was even more enthusiastic for Busoni than for Ysaye. I hear both spoken of as artists, as great artists; and yet, if words have any meaning, it seems to me that only one of the two is an artist at all, and the other, with all his ability, only an executant. Admit, for a moment, that the technique of the two is equal, though it is not quite possible to admit even that, in the strictest sense. So far, we have made only a beginning. Without technique, perfect of its kind, no one is worth consideration in any art. The rope-dancer or the acrobat must be perfect in technique before he appears on the stage at all; in his case, a lapse from perfection brings its own penalty, death perhaps; his art begins when his technique is already perfect. Artists who deal in materials less fragile than human

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life should have no less undeviating a sense of responsibility to themselves and to art. But the performance comes afterwards, and it is the performance with which we are concerned. Of two acrobats, each equally skilful, one will be individual and an artist, the other will remain consummately skilful and uninteresting; the one having begun where the other leaves off. Now Busoni can do, on the pianoforte, whatever he can conceive; the question is, what can he conceive? As he sat at the piano playing Chopin, I thought of Busoni, of the Bechstein piano, of what fingers can do, of many other extraneous things, never of Chopin. I saw the pianist with the Christ-like head, the carefully negligent elegance of his appearance, and I heard wonderful sounds coming out of the Bechstein piano; but, try as hard as I liked, I could not feel the contact of soul and instrument, I could not feel that a human being was expressing himself in sound. A task was magnificently accomplished, but a new beauty had not come into the world. Then the Kreutzer Sonata began, and I looked at Ysaye, as he stood, an almost shapeless mass of flesh, holding the violin between his fat fingers, and looking vaguely into the air. He put the violin to his shoulder. The face had been like a mass of clay, waiting the sculptor's thumb. As the music came, an invisible touch seemed to pass over it; the heavy mouth and chin remained firm, pressed down on the violin; but the eyelids and the eyebrows began to move, as if the eyes saw the sound, and were drawing it in luxuriously, with a kind of sleepy ecstasy, as one draws in perfume out of a flower. Then, in that

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instant, a beauty which had never been in the world came into the world; a new thing was created, lived, died, having revealed itself to all those who were capable of receiving it. That thing was neither Beethoven nor Ysaye, it was made out of their meeting; it was music, not abstract, but embodied in sound; and just that miracle could never occur again, though others like it might be repeated for ever. When the sound stopped, the face returned to its blind and deaf waiting; the interval, like all the rest of life probably, not counting in the existence of that particular soul, which came and went with the music.

And Ysaye seems to me the type of the artist, not because he is faultless in technique, but because he begins to create his art at the point where faultless technique leaves off. With him, every faculty is in harmony; he has not even too much of any good thing. There are times when Busoni astonishes one; Ysaye never astonishes one, it seems natural that he should do everything that he does, just as he does it. Art, as Aristotle has said finally, should always have "a continual slight novelty"; it should never astonish, for we are astonished only by some excess or default, never by a thing being what it ought to be. It is a fashion of the moment to prize extravagance and to be timid of perfection. That is why we give the name of artist to those who can startle us most. We have come to value technique for the violence which it gives into the hands of those who possess it, in their assault upon our nerves. We have come to look upon technique as an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end. We have but

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one word of praise, and we use that one word lavishly. An Ysaye and a Busoni are the same to us, and it is to our credit if we are even aware that Ysaye is the equal of Busoni.

## Nietzsche on Tragedy.

I HAVE been reading Nietzsche on the Origin of Tragedy, in the admirable French translation published under the care of M. Henri Albert by the "Mercure de France": "L'Origine de la Tragédie, ou, Hellénisme et Pessimisme." The book was written at the age of twenty-eight, and we have Nietzsche's "criticism of himself" by way of preface, sixteen years later, and an autobiographical fragment, written two years later still, which M. Albert has extracted from one of the posthumous volumes. I have been reading all that with the delight of one who discovers a new world, which he has seen already in a dream. I never take up Nietzsche without the surprise of finding something familiar. Sometimes it is the answer to a question which I have only asked; sometimes it seems to me that I have guessed at the answer. And, in his restless energy, his hallucinatory vision, the agility of this climbing mind of the mountains, I find that invigoration which only a "tragic philosopher" can give. "A sort of mystic soul," as he says of himself, "almost the soul of a Mænad, who, troubled, capricious, and half irresolute whether to cede or fly, stammers out something in a foreign tongue."

The book is a study in the origin of tragedy among the Greeks, as it arose out of music through the medium of the chorus. We are apt to look on the chorus in Greek plays as almost a negligible part of the structure; as, in fact, hardly more than the comments of that "ideal spectator" whom Schlegel called up out of the depths of the German consciousness. We know, however, that the chorus was the

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original nucleus of the play, that the action on which it seems only to comment is no more than a development of the chorus. Here is the problem to which Nietzsche endeavours to find an answer. He finds it, unlike the learned persons who study Greek texts, among the roots of things, in the very making of the universe. Art arises, he tells us, from the conflict of the two creative spirits, symbolised by the Greeks in the two gods, Apollo and Dionysus; and he names the one the Apollonian spirit, which we see in plastic art, and the other the Dionysiac spirit, which we see in music. Apollo is the god of dreams, Dionysus the god of intoxication; the one represents for us the world of appearances, the other is, as it were, the voice of things in themselves. The chorus, then, which arose out of the hymns to Dionysus, is the "lyric cry," the vital ecstasy; the drama is the projection into vision, into a picture, of the exterior, temporary world of forms. "We now see that the stage and the action are conceived only as vision: that the sole 'reality' is precisely the chorus, which itself produces the vision, and expresses it by the aid of the whole symbolism of dance, sound, and word." In the admirable phrase of Schiller, the chorus is "a living rampart against reality," against that false reality of daily life which is a mere drapery of civilisation, and has nothing to do with the primitive reality of nature. The realistic drama begins with Euripides; and Euripides, the casuist, the friend of Socrates (whom Nietzsche qualifies as the true decadent, an "instrument of decomposition," the slayer of art, the father of modern science), brings tragedy to an end, as he substitutes pathos for action, thought for contemplation.

## Nietzsche on Tragedy.

tion, and passionate sentiments for the primitive ecstasy. "Armed with the scourge of its syllogisms, an optimist dialectic drives the music out of tragedy : that is to say, destroys the very essence of tragedy, an essence which can be interpreted only as a manifestation and objectivation of Dionysiac states, as a visible symbol of music, as the dream-world of a Dionysiac intoxication."

There are many pages, scattered throughout his work, in which Pater has dealt with some of the Greek problems very much in the spirit of Nietzsche ; with that problem, for instance, of the "blitheness and serenity" of the Greek spirit, and of the gulf of horror over which it seems to rest, suspended as on the wings of the condor. That myth of Dionysus Zagreus, "a Bacchus who had been in hell," which is the foundation of the marvellous new myth of "Denys l'Auxerrois," seems always to be in the mind of Nietzsche, though indeed he refers to it but once, and passingly. Pater has shown, as Nietzsche shows in greater detail and with a more rigorous logic, that this "serenity" was but an accepted illusion, and all Olympus itself but "intermediary," an escape, through the æsthetics of religion, from the trouble at the heart of things ; art, with its tragic illusions of life, being another form of escape. To Nietzsche the world and existence justify themselves only as an æsthetic phenomenon, the work of a god wholly the artist ; "and in this sense the object of the tragic myth is precisely to convince us that even the horrible and the monstrous are no more than an æsthetic game, played with itself by the Will in the eternal plenitude of its joy." "The Will" is Schopenhauer's "Will," the vital principle.

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"If it were possible," says Nietzsche, in one of his astonishing figures of speech, "to imagine a dissonance becoming a human being (and what is man but that?), in order to endure life, this dissonance would need some admirable illusion to hide from itself its true nature, under a veil of beauty." This is the aim of art, as it calls up pictures of the visible world and of the little, temporary actions of men on its surface. The hoofed satyr of Dionysus, as he leaps into the midst of these gracious appearances, drunk with the young wine of nature, surly with the old wisdom of Silenus, brings the real, excessive, disturbing truth of things suddenly into the illusion ; and is gone again, with a shrill laugh, without forcing on us more of his presence than we can bear.

I have but touched on a few points in an argument which has itself the ecstatic quality of which it speaks. A good deal of the book is concerned with the latest development of music, and especially with Wagner. Nietzsche, after his change of sides, tells us not to take this part too seriously : "what I fancied I heard in the Wagnerian music has nothing to do with Wagner." Few better things have been said about music than these pages; some of them might be quoted against the "programme" music which has been written since that time, and against the false theory on which musicians have attempted to harness music in the shafts of literature. The whole book is awakening ; in Nietzsche's own words, "a prodigious hope speaks in it."

## A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert.

THE interpreter of ancient music, Arnold Dolmetsch, is one of those rare magicians who are able to make roses blossom in mid-winter. While music has been modernising itself until the piano becomes an orchestra, and Berlioz requires four orchestras to obtain a pianissimo, this strange man of genius has quietly gone back a few centuries and discovered for himself an exquisite lost world, which was disappearing like a fresco peeling off a wall. He has burrowed in libraries and found unknown manuscripts like a savant, he has worked at misunderstood notations and found out a way of reading them like a cryptogrammatist, he has first found out how to restore and then how to make over again harpsichord, and virginals, and clavichord, and all those instruments which had become silent curiosities in museums.

It is only beginning to be realised, even by musical people, that the clavecin music of, for instance, Bach, loses at least half its charm, almost its identity, when played on the modern grand piano; that the exquisite music of Rameau and Couperin, the brilliant and beautiful music of Scarlatti, is almost inaudible on everything but the harpsichord and the viols; and that there exists, far earlier than these writers, a mass of English and Italian music of extreme beauty, which has never been spoiled on the piano because it has never been played on it. To any one who has once touched a spinet, harpsichord, or clavichord, the piano must always remain a somewhat inadequate instrument; lacking in the precision, the penetrating charm, the infinite definite

## A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert.

reasons for existence of those instruments of wires and jacks and quills which its metallic rumble has been supposed so entirely to have superseded. As for the clavichord, to have once touched it, feeling the softness with which one's fingers make their own music, like wind among the reeds, is to have lost something of one's relish even for the music of the violin, which is also a windy music, but the music of wind blowing sharply among the trees. It is on such instruments that Mr. Dolmetsch plays to us ; and he plays to us also on the lute, the theorbo, the viola da gamba, the viola d' amore, and I know not how many varieties of those stringed instruments which are most familiar to most of us from the early Italian pictures in which whimsical little angels with crossed legs hold them to their chins.

Mr. Dolmetsch is, I suppose, the only living man who can read lute-music and play on the lute, an instrument of extraordinary beauty, which was once as common in England as the guitar still is in Spain. And, having made with his own hands the materials of the music which he has recovered from oblivion, he has taught himself and he has taught others to play this music on these instruments and to sing it to their accompaniment. In a music room, which is really the living room of a house, with viols hanging on the walls, a chamber-organ in one corner, a harpsichord in another, a clavichord laid across the arms of a chair, this music seems to carry one out of the world, and shut one in upon a house of dreams, full of intimate and ghostly voices. It is a house of peace, where music is still that refreshment which it was before it took fever, and became

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accomplice and not minister to the nerves, and brought the clamour of the world into its seclusion.

Go from a concert at Dolmetsch's to a Tschaikowsky concert at the Queen's Hall. Tschaikowsky is a debauch, not so much passionate as feverish. The rushing of his violins, like the rushing of an army of large winged birds; the thud, snap, and tingle of his strange orchestra; the riotous image of Russian peasants leaping and hopping in their country dances, which his dance measures call up before one; those sweet solid harmonies in which (if I may quote the voluptuous phrase of a woman) one sets one's teeth as into nougat; all this is like a very material kind of pleasure, in which the senses for a moment forget the soul. For a moment only, for is it not the soul, a kind of discontented crying out against pleasure and pain, which comes back distressingly into this after all pathetic music? All modern music is pathetic; discontent (so much idealism as that!) has come into all modern music, that it may be sharpened and disturbed enough to fix our attention. And Tschaikowsky speaks straight to the nerves, with that touch of unmanliness which is another characteristic of modern art. There is a vehement and mighty sorrow in the Passion Music of Bach, by the side of which the grief of Tschaikowsky is like the whimpering of a child. He is unconscious of reticence, unconscious of self-control. He is unhappy, and he weeps floods of tears, beats his breast, curses the daylight; he sees only the misery of the moment, and he sees the misery of the moment as a thing endless and overwhelming. The child who has broken his toy can realise nothing in the future but a passionate regret for the toy.

## A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert.

In Tschaikowsky there is none of the quieting of thought. The only healing for our nerves lies in abstract thought, and he can never get far enough from his nerves to look calmly at his own discontent. All those wild, broken rhythms, rushing this way and that, are letting out his secret all the time : "I am unhappy, and I know not why I am unhappy ; I want, but I know not what I want." In the most passionate and the most questioning music of Wagner there is always air ; Tschaikowsky is suffocating. It is himself that he pities so much, and not himself because he shares in the general sorrow of the world. To Tristan and Isolde the whole universe is an exultant and martyred sharer in their love ; they know only the absolute. Even suffering does not bring nobility to Tschaikowsky.

I speak of Wagner because it seems to me that Wagner, alone among quite modern musicians, and though indeed he appeals to our nerves more forcibly than any of them, has that breadth and universality by which emotion ceases to be merely personal and becomes elemental. To the musicians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, music was an art which had to be carefully guarded from the too disturbing presence of emotion ; emotion is there always, whenever the music is fine music ; but the music is something much more than a means for the expression of emotion. It is a pattern, its beauty lies in its obedience to a law, it is music made for music's sake, with what might be called a more exclusive devotion to art than that of our modern musicians. This music aims at the creation of beauty in sound ; it conceives of beautiful sound as a thing which cannot exist outside order and measure ; it has not yet come

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to look upon transgression as an essential part of liberty. It does not even desire liberty, but is content with loving obedience. It can express emotion, but it will never express an emotion carried to that excess at which the modern idea of emotion begins. Thus, for all its suggestions of pain, grief, melancholy, it will remain, for us at least, happy music, voices of a house of peace. Is there, in the future of music, after it has expressed for us all our emotions, and we are tired of our emotions, and weary enough to be content with a little rest, any likelihood of a return to this happy music, into which beauty shall come without the selfishness of desire?

## The Dramatisation of Song.

ALL art is a compromise, in which the choice of what is to be foregone must be left somewhat to the discretion of nature. When the sculptor foregoes colour, when the painter foregoes relief, when the poet foregoes the music which soars beyond words and the musician that precise meaning which lies in words alone, he follows a kind of necessity in things, and the compromise seems to be ready-made for him. But there will always be those who are discontented with no matter what fixed limits, who dream, like Wagner, of a possible, or, like Mallarmé, of an impossible, fusion of the arts. These would invent for themselves a compromise which has not yet come into the world, a gain without loss, a re-adjustment in which the scales shall bear so much additional weight without trembling. But nature is not always obedient to this too autocratic command.

Take the art of the voice. In its essence, the art of the voice is the same in the nightingale and in Melba. The same note is produced in the same way; the expression given to that note, the syllable which that note renders, are quite different things. Song does not in itself require words in order to realise even the utmost of its capacities. The voice is an instrument like the violin, and no more in need of words for its expression than the violin. Perhaps the ideal of singing would be attained when a marvellous voice, which had absorbed into itself all that temperament and training had to give it, sang inarticulate music, like a violin which could play itself. There is nothing which such an



Georgette Leblanc



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instrument could not express, nothing which exists as pure music; and, in this way, we should have the art of the voice, with the least possible compromise.

The compromise is already far on its way when words begin to come into the song. Here are two arts helping one another; something is gained, but how much is lost? Undoubtedly the words lose, and does not the voice lose something also, in its directness of appeal? Add acting to voice and words, and you get the ultimate compromise, opera, in which other arts as well have their share, and in which Wagner would have us see the supreme form of art. Again something is lost; we lose more and more, perhaps for a greater gain. Tristan sings lying on his back, in order to represent a sick man; the actual notes which he sings are written partly in order to indicate the voice of a sick man. For the sake of what we gain in dramatic and even theatrical expressiveness, we have lost a two-fold means of producing vocal beauty. Let us rejoice in the gain, by all means; but not without some consciousness of the loss, not with too ready a belief that the final solution of the problem has been found.

I have just been seeing and hearing in Paris a very curious experiment in the combination of the arts, about which I am the more anxious to say a few words as it is quite likely that we may, one of these days, have an opportunity of seeing and hearing it in London. Madame Georgette Leblanc, a singer who is known for her creations of Carmen and of Charlotte Corday, at the Opéra-Comique, has developed a method of her own for singing and acting at the same time, not as a character in an opera, but in the

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interpretation of separate songs, the songs of Schumann and Schubert, for instance, and of songs written for the words of Verlaine, Maeterlinck, and others, by Gabriel Fauré, Gabriel Fabre, and other musicians. If she comes to London she will take one of the smaller halls, where the effect at which she aims could be best realised ; when I heard her in Paris, it was in a private house, with the accompaniment on the piano of M. Fabre, the composer of a good many of the songs.

Imagine a woman who suggests at the same time Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs. Brown-Potter, without being really like either ; she is small, exuberantly blonde, her head is surrounded by masses of loosely twisted blonde hair ; she has large grey eyes, that can be grave, or mocking, or passionate, or cruel, or watchful ; a large nose, an intent, eloquent mouth. She wears a trailing dress that follows the lines of the figure vaguely, supple to every movement. When she sings, she has an old, high-backed chair in which she can sit, or on which she can lean. When I heard her, there was a mirror on the other side of the room, opposite to her ; she saw no one else in the room, once she had surrendered herself to the possession of the song, but she was always conscious of that image of herself which came back to her out of the mirror : it was herself watching herself, in a kind of delight at the beauty which she was evoking out of words, notes, and expressive movement.

Her voice is strong and rich, imperfectly trained, but the voice of a born singer ; her acting is even more the acting of a born actress; but it is the temperament of the woman that flames into her voice and gestures, and sets her whole being

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violently and delicately before you. She makes a drama of each song, and she re-creates that drama over again, in her rendering of the intentions of the words and of the music. It is as much with her eyes and her hands, as with her voice, that she evokes the melody of a picture ; it is a picture that sings, and that sings in all its lines. There is something in her aspect, what shall I call it ? tenacious ; it is a woman who is an artist because she is a woman, who takes in energy at all her senses and give out energy at all her senses. She sang some tragic songs of Schumann, some mysterious songs of Maeterlinck, some delicate love-songs of Charles van Lerberghe. As one looked and listened it was impossible to think more of the words than of the music or of the music than of the words. One took them simultaneously, as one feels at once the softness and the perfume of a flower. I understood why Mallarmé had seemed to see in her the realisation of one of his dreams. Here was a new art, made up of a new mixing of the arts, in one subtly intoxicating elixir. To Mallarmé it was the more exquisite because there was in it none of the broad general appeal of opera, of the gross recognised proportions of things.

This dramatisation of song, done by any one less subtly, less completely, and less sincerely an artist, would lead us, I am afraid, into something more disastrous than even the official concert, with its rigid persons in evening dress holding sheets of music in their tremulous hands, and singing the notes set down for them to the best of their vocal ability. Madame Georgette Leblanc is an exceptional artist, and she has made an art after her own likeness, which exists because

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it is the expression of herself, of a strong nature always in vibration. What she feels as a woman she can render as an artist ; she is at once instinctive and deliberate, deliberate because it is her natural instinct, the natural instinct of a woman who is essentially a woman, to be so. I imagine her always singing in front of a mirror, always recognising her own shadow there, and the more absolutely abandoned to what the song is saying through her because of that uninterrupted communion with herself.

## The Speaking of Verse

A very interesting lecture was given on Thursday, May 22, at the Coronet Theatre, by M. Silvain, of the Comédie Française, on the art of speaking, or, as it might more correctly have been called, on the art of speaking verse. I had just been to a small private gathering in the committee-room of Clifford's Inn, to hear some verse spoken to the psaltery by Miss Florence Farr. Mr. Yeats has written, in the May number of the *Monthly Review*, on this attempt, made by him with the assistance of Mr. Dolmetsch, at the revival of an old art: the art of speaking verse to a pitch sounded by a musical instrument. He has also lectured on the subject in public, and talked much about it in private, and has found disciples, and had psalteries made for him by Mr. Dolmetsch, and found persons with voices to chant verse to the accompaniment of the psaltery. I have heard some of these performances, but in these pages I must limit myself to what I heard at the rehearsal in Clifford's Inn, and to Mr. Yeats' contentions in his article in the *Monthly Review*.

The method of M. Silvain (who, besides being an actor, is Professor of Declamation at the Conservatoire) is the method of the elocutionist, but of the elocutionist at his best. He has a large, round, vibrating voice, over which he has perfect command. "M. Silvain," says M. Catulle Mendès, "est de ceux, bien rares au Théâtre Français, qu'on entend même lorsqu'ils parlent bas." He has trained his voice to do everything that he wants it to do; his whole body is full of life, energy, sensitiveness to the emotion of every word; his gestures seem to be at once spontaneous

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and calculated. He adores verse, for its own sake, as a brilliant executant adores his violin ; he has an excellent contempt for prose, as an inferior form. In all his renderings of verse, he never forgot that it was at the same time speech, the direct expression of character, and also poetry, a thing with its own reasons for existence. He gave La Fontaine in one way, Molière in another, Victor Hugo in another, some poor modern verse in yet another. But in all there was the same attempt : to treat verse in the spirit of rhetoric, that is to say, to over-emphasise it consistently and for effect. In a tirade from Corneille's "Cinna," he followed the angry reasoning of the lines by counting on his fingers : one, two, three, as if he were underlining the important words of each clause. The danger of this method is that it is apt to turn poetry into a kind of bad logic. There, precisely, is the danger of the French conception of poetry, and M. Silvain's method brings out the worst faults of that conception.

Now in speaking verse to musical notes, as Mr. Yeats would have us do, we are at least safe from this danger. Mr. Yeats, being a poet, knows that verse is first of all song. In purely lyrical verse, with which he is at present chiefly concerned, the verse itself has a melody which demands expression by the voice, not only when it is "set to music," but when it is said aloud. Every poet, when he reads his own verse, reads it with certain inflections of the voice, in what is often called a "sing-song" way, quite different from the way in which he would read prose. Most poets aim rather at giving the musical effect, and the atmosphere, the vocal atmosphere, of the poem, than at

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emphasising individual meanings. They give, in the musician's sense, a "reading" of the poem, an interpretation of the poem as a composition. Mr. Yeats thinks that this kind of reading can be stereotyped, so to speak, the pitch noted down in musical notes, and reproduced with the help of a simple stringed instrument. By way of proof, Miss Farr repeated one of Mr. Yeats' lyrics, as nearly as possible in the way in which Mr. Yeats himself is accustomed to say it. She took the pitch from certain notes which she had written down, and which she struck on Mr. Dolmetsch's psaltery. Now Miss Farr has a beautiful voice, and a genuine feeling for the beauty of verse. She said the lines better than most people would have said them, but, to be quite frank, did she say them so as to produce the effect Mr. Yeats himself produces whenever he repeats those lines? The difference was fundamental. The one was a spontaneous thing, profoundly felt; the other, a deliberate imitation, in which the fixing of the notes made any personal interpretation, good or bad, impossible.

I admit that the way in which most actors speak verse is so deplorable that there is much to be said for a purely mechanical method, even if it should turn actors into little more than human phonographs. Many actors treat verse as a slightly more stilted kind of prose, and their main aim in saying it is to conceal from the audience the fact that it is not prose. They think of nothing but what they take to be the expression, and when they come to a passage of purely lyric quality they give it as if it were a quotation, having nothing to do with the rest of the speech. Anything is better than this haphazard way of misdoing things, either

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M. Silvain's oratory or the intoning into which Mr. Yeats' method would almost certainly drift. But I cannot feel that it is possible to do much good by a ready-made method of any kind. Let the actor be taught how to breathe, how to articulate, let his voice be trained to express what he wants to express, and then let him be made to feel something of what verse means by being verse. Let him, by all means, study one of Mr. Yeats' readings, interpreted to him by means of the notes ; it will teach him to unlearn something and to learn something more. But then let him forget his notes and Mr. Yeats' method, if he is to make verse live on the stage.





Steinberghardt.

## Sarah Bernhardt.

I AM not sure that the best moment to study an artist is not the moment of what is called decadence. The first energy of inspiration is gone; what remains is the method, the mechanism, and it is that which alone one can study, as one can study the mechanism of the body, not the principle of life itself. What is done mechanically, after the heat of the blood has cooled, and the divine accidents have ceased to happen, is precisely all that was consciously skilful in the performance of an art. To see all this mechanism left bare, as the form of the skeleton is left bare when age thins the flesh upon it, is to learn more easily all that is to be learnt of structure, the art which not art but nature has hitherto concealed with its merciful covering.

The art of Sarah Bernhardt has always been a very conscious art, but it spoke to us, once, with so electrical a shock, as if nerve touched nerve, or the mere "*contour subtil*" of the voice were laid tinglingly on one's spinal cord, that it was difficult to analyse it coldly. She was Phèdre or Marguerite Gautier, she was Adrienne Lecouvreur, Fédora, La Tosca, the actual woman, and she was also that other actual woman, Sarah Bernhardt. Two magics met and united, in the artist and the woman, each alone of its kind. There was an excitement in going to the theatre; one's pulses beat feverishly before the curtain had risen; there was almost a kind of obscure sensation of peril, such as one feels when the lioness leaps into the cage, on the other side of the bars. And the acting was like a passionate declaration, offered to some one unknown; it was as if the

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whole nervous force of the audience were sucked out of it and flung back, intensified, upon itself, as it encountered the single, insatiable, indomitable nervous force of the woman. And so, in its way, this very artificial acting seemed the mere instinctive, irresistible expression of a temperament ; it mesmerised one, awakening the senses and sending the intelligence to sleep.

After all, though Réjane skins emotions alive, and Duse serves them up to you on golden dishes, it is Sarah Bernhardt who prepares the supreme feast. In "*La Dame aux Camélias*," still, she shows herself, as an actress, the greatest actress in the world. It is all sheer acting ; there is no suggestion, as with Duse, there is no canaille attractiveness, as with Réjane ; the thing is plastic, a modelling of emotion before you, with every vein visible ; she leaves nothing to the imagination, gives you every motion, all the physical signs of death, all the fierce abandonment to every mood, to grief, to delight, to lassitude. When she suffers, in the scene, for instance, where Armand insults her, she is like a trapped wild beast which some one is torturing, and she wakes just that harrowing pity. One's whole flesh suffers with her flesh ; her voice caresses and excites like a touch ; it has a throbbing, monotonous music, which breaks deliciously, which pauses suspended, and then resolves itself in a perfect chord. Her voice is like a thing detachable from herself, a thing which she takes in her hands like a musical instrument, playing on the stops cunningly with her fingers. Prose, when she speaks it, becomes a kind of verse, with all the rhythms, the vocal harmonies, of a kind of human poetry. Her whisper is heard across the whole

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theatre, every syllable distinct, and yet it is really a whisper. She comes on the stage like a miraculous painted idol, all nerves ; she runs through the gamut of the sex, and ends a child, when the approach of death brings Marguerite back to that deep infantile part of woman. She plays the part now with the accustomed ease of one who puts on and off an old shoe. It is almost a part of her ; she knows it through all her senses. And she moved me as much last night as she moved me when I first saw her play the part eleven or twelve years ago. To me, sitting where I was, not too near the stage, she might have been five-and-twenty. I saw none of the mechanism of the art, as I saw it in "*L'Aiglon*" ; here art still concealed art. Her vitality was equal to the vitality of Réjane ; it is differently expressed, that is all. With Réjane the vitality is direct ; it is the appeal of Gavroche, the sharp, impudent urchin of the streets ; Sarah Bernhardt's vitality is electrical, and shoots its currents through all manner of winding ways. In form it belongs to an older period, just as the writing of Dumas fils belongs to an earlier period than the writing of Meilhac. It comes to us with the tradition to which it has given life ; it does not spring into our midst, unruly as nature.

But it is in "*Phèdre*" that Sarah Bernhardt must be seen, if we are to realise all that her art is capable of. In writing "*Phèdre*," Racine anticipated Sarah Bernhardt. If the part had been made for her by a poet of our own days, it could not have been brought more perfectly within her limits, nor could it have more perfectly filled those limits to their utmost edge. It is one of the greatest parts in poetical drama, and it is written with a sense of the stage

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not less sure than its sense of dramatic poetry. There was a time when Racine was looked upon as old-fashioned, as conventional, as frigid. It is realised nowadays that his verse has cadences like the cadences of Verlaine, that his language is as simple and direct as prose, and that he is one of the most passionate of poets. Of the character of Phèdre Racine tells us that it is “ce que j'ai peut-être mis de plus raisonnable sur le théâtre.” The word strikes oddly on our ears, but every stage of the passion of Phèdre is indeed reasonable, logical, as only a French poet, since the Greeks themselves, could make it. The passion itself is an abnormal, an insane thing, and that passion comes to us with all its force and all its perversity; but the words in which it is expressed are never extravagant, they are always clear, simple, temperate, perfectly precise and explicit. The art is an art exquisitely balanced between the conventional and the realistic, and the art of Sarah Bernhardt, when she plays the part, is balanced with just the same unerring skill. She seems to abandon herself wholly, at times, to her “fureurs”; she tears the words with her teeth, and spits them out of her mouth, like a wild beast ravening upon prey; but there is always dignity, restraint, a certain remoteness of soul, and there is always the verse, and her miraculous rendering of the verse, to keep Racine in the right atmosphere. Of what we call acting there is little, little change in the expression of the face. The part is a part for the voice, and it is only in “Phèdre” that one can hear that orchestra, her voice, in all its variety of beauty. In her modern plays, plays in prose, she is condemned to use only a few of the instruments of the orchestra: an

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actress must, in such parts, be conversational, and for how much beauty or variety is there room in modern conversation? But here she has Racine's verse, along with Racine's psychology, and the language has nothing more to offer the voice of a tragic actress. She seems to speak her words, her lines, with a kind of joyful satisfaction; all the artist in her delights in the task. Her nerves are in it, as well as her intelligence; but everything is coloured by the poetry, everything is subordinate to beauty.

Well, and she seems still to be the same *Phèdre* that she was eleven or twelve years ago, as she is the same "*Dame aux Camélias*." Is it reality, is it illusion? Illusion, perhaps, but an illusion which makes itself into a very effectual kind of reality. She has played these pieces until she has got them, not only by heart, but by every nerve and by every vein, and now the ghost of the real thing is so like the real thing that there is hardly any telling the one from the other. It is the living on of a mastery once absolutely achieved, without so much as the need of a new effort. The test of the artist, the test which decides how far the artist is still living, as more than a force of memory, lies in the power to create a new part, to bring new material to life. Last year, in "*L'Aiglon*," it seemed to me that Sarah Bernhardt showed how little she still possessed that power, and this year I see the same failure in "*Francesca da Rimini*."

The play, it must be admitted, is hopelessly poor, common, melodramatic, without atmosphere, without nobility, subtlety, or passion; it degrades the story which we owe to Dante and not to history (for, in itself, the story is a quite ordinary story of adultery: Dante and the

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flames of his hell purged it), it degrades it almost out of all recognition. These middle-aged people, who wrangle shrewishly behind the just turned back of the husband and almost in the hearing of the child, are people in whom it is impossible to be interested, apart from any fine meanings put into them in the acting. And yet, since M. de Max has made hardly less than a creation out of the part of Giovanni, filling it, as he has, with his own nervous force and passionately restrained art, might it not have been possible once for Sarah Bernhardt to have thrilled us even as this Francesca of Mr. Marion Crawford? I think so; she has taken bad plays as willingly as good plays, to turn them to her own purpose, and she has been as triumphant, if not as fine, in bad plays as in good ones. Now her Francesca is lifeless, a melodious image, making meaningless music. She says over the words, cooingly, chantingly, or frantically, as the expression-marks, to which she seems to act, demand. The interest is in following her expression-marks.

The first thing one notices in her acting, when one is free to watch it coolly, is the way in which she subordinates effects to effect. She has her crescendos, of course, and it is these which people are most apt to remember, but the extraordinary force of these crescendos comes from the smooth and level manner in which the main part of the speaking is done. She is not anxious to make points at every moment, to put all the possible emphasis into every separate phrase; I have heard her glide over really significant phrases which, taken by themselves, would seem to deserve more consideration, but which she has wisely

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subordinated to an overpowering effect of ensemble. Sarah Bernhardt's acting always reminds me of a musical performance. Her voice is itself an instrument of music, and she plays upon it as a conductor plays upon an orchestra. The movements of her body, her gestures, the expression of her face, are all harmonious, are all parts of a single harmony. It is not reality which she aims at giving us, it is reality transposed into another atmosphere, as if seen in a mirror, in which all its outlines become more gracious. The pleasure which we get from seeing her as Francesca or as Marguerite Gautier is doubled by that other pleasure, never completely out of our minds, that she is also Sarah Bernhardt. One sometimes forgets that Réjane is acting at all ; it is the real woman of the part, Sapho, or Zaza, or Yanetta, who lives before us. Also one sometimes forgets that Duse is acting, that she is even pretending to be Magda or Silvia ; it is Duse herself who lives there, on the stage. But Sarah Bernhardt is always the actress as well as the part ; when she is at her best, she is both equally, and our consciousness of the one does not disturb our possession by the other. When she is not at her best, we see only the actress, the incomparable craftswoman openly labouring at her work.

## Rostand, Sarah, and Coquelin.

M. ROSTAND is one of the cleverest of contemporary writers. He appeals to the readers and audiences of to-day as a millionaire appeals to society. He enters every door. Critics praise him, the Academy elects him, he sells by the thousand ; French actors make fortunes by him at home, and take him over the world in one long triumph. He is translated, and played in all the native languages of the countries where he has already been played in French. The greatest living French actress and the greatest living French actor join together to increase his fame and their own. At this moment Sarah Bernhardt and Coquelin are in London, at Her Majesty's, and they have come chiefly in order to act "*L'Aiglon*," his latest success, and, we are assured, his latest masterpiece. Well, a fame of this kind, the conquering, on whatever terms, of so much of the world, means something. It means that M. Rostand has known exactly what he wanted to do, and has done it. With an exquisite agility of mind he has run between many dangers: he has been poetic, but not too poetic; extravagant, but not too extravagant; humorous, but not too humorous; just sufficiently simple, precious, modern, archaic, cynical, and sentimental, to please all tastes. He has learnt declamation from Victor Hugo, the swing of sword and cape from Dumas, the art of tight-rope dancing on the cord of French verse from Banville ; he has learnt, from some business-like quality of his own mind, how to avoid Realism and Symbolism and every other good or bad poetical school of the day. He writes melodrama with so neat a finish to the flourish that it

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can easily be passed off as tragedy; and he writes verse with so deceptive a glitter that it can easily be passed off as poetry.

In fact, if I could get one obstinate conviction out of my head, perhaps I might enjoy "*Cyrano de Bergerac*." M. Rostand's play is written in verse: anything which is written in verse must, to my thinking, be poetry, or it is nothing; M. Rostand's verse is enormously clever, but it is not poetry. Now I notice, by the enthusiasm with which "*Cyrano*" was received, both in France and England, when it made its first appearance, that there are a great many people who do not limit their pleasures as I do; who disagree with me in thinking that verse need necessarily be poetry. I quite understand such people admiring "*Cyrano*." I also understand the feeling of those who consider that "*Cyrano*" is poetry of a particularly novel and a particularly exquisite kind. They are the people who once admired the "*Love-Letters of a Violinist*" and who now admire the "*Love-Letters of an Englishwoman*." They are the people who admire the imitation of the real thing more than the real thing. "*Cyrano*" is as much like poetry as the brilliants of the stage are like diamonds. It is made to flash, and to take in the ignorant. It has sentimentality for the sentimental, artificial fun for the vulgar, preciosity for the pretender to taste, clatter for the nursery delight of the juvenile-minded, rope-dancing agility for the admiration of the sportsman in art. We have been told solemnly, by critics too old to know any better, that the play marks the renaissance of the genuine French spirit; that it is a triumphant revolt against the Northern blasts, the Decadent

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miasmas, the Symbolist fogs, which have been making France unfruitful. If to possess the French spirit is to be lacking in ideas, in the sense of reality, in sincerity, in passion, in poetry ; if it is to be rhetorical, frigidly artificial, cheap in effect, spendthrift in display ; then, and then only, can "Cyrano" be accepted on the terms of its admirers.

With Coquelin and Sarah Bernhardt it receives a splendid illumination. The part of Roxane is a secondary part, and Sarah for once is secondary in the play in which she acts. She is young, beautiful, and a little ordinary ; amazingly young, and condemned by her part to be a little ordinary. In a piece all charades and stage directions she has no chance to be any one of her finer selves, and to see her in "Cyrano" immediately after seeing her in "Phèdre" is to realise the ability of the artist, and how much the artist is at the command of the actress. She gives one no creation ; there is no creative material in the play ; but all there is to do she does exquisitely. As for Coquelin, what a lesson he was to our gasconading actors ! Here, in a piece infinitely cleverer than the sword and cape pieces in which Mr. Lewis Waller and other clever English actors do their best to be humorously heroic, one saw the blusterer of resource, the sad wit, the tender-hearted spadassin. Coquelin has the voice, the manner, the mimicry, everything that is needed to carry such a part through with a rush ; it is a part for the elocutionist, and Coquelin is an incomparable elocutionist.

On the night on which I saw it, "L'Aiglon" went on until after midnight, which was not entirely the fault of the play. It was a fatiguing performance, which was not

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entirely the fault of the intervals. Once more I admired M. Rostand's cleverness, as I saw how skilfully it had been written to be acted, and to be acted by just these two people. Scrutinise even the first act, and you will see that it has been composed like a piece of music, to be played by one performer, Sarah Bernhardt. To Sarah Bernhardt acting is a performance on a musical instrument. One seems to see the expression marks : piano, pianissimo, allargando, and just where the tempo rubato comes in. She never forgets that art is not nature, and that when one is speaking verse one is not talking prose. She speaks with a liquid articulation of every syllable, like one who loves the savor of words on the tongue, giving them a beauty and an expressiveness often not in them themselves. Her face changes less than you might expect ; it is not over-possessed by detail, it gives always the synthesis. The smile of the artist, a wonderful smile which has never aged with her, pierces through the passion or languor of the part. It is often accompanied by a suave, voluptuous tossing of the head, and is like the smile of one who inhales some delicious perfume, with half-closed eyes. All through the level perfection of her acting there are little sharp snaps of the nerves ; and these are but one indication of that perfect mechanism which her art really is. Her finger is always upon the spring ; it touches or releases it, and the effect follows instantaneously. Coquelin, in his equal perfection, his ripe, mellow art, his passion of humour, his touching vehemence, makes himself seem less a divine machine, more a delightfully faulty person. His voice is firm, sonorous, flexible, a human, expressive, amusing voice, not the elaborate musical instru-

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ment of Sarah, which seems to go by itself, câline, cooing, lamenting, raging, or in that wonderful swift chatter which she uses with such instant and deliberate effect. His face is the face of his part, always a disguise, never a revelation. He is not a temperament, nor a student, nor anything apart from the art of the actor ; he is the actor, consummately master of his métier. And how much the master of themselves are all these French actors, whom it is so instructive for us to see ! Movement, gesture, excitement, are natural to them, and, so far from needing to be forced, can be vividly and temperately repressed. With most of them acting is a kind of second nature, and a nature capable of training. With Sarah and with Coquelin also, nature has been trained with infinite care ; but then nature, with them, happens to be genius.





Bonne fin de la vie

C. Lapouge

## Coquelin and Molière: Some Aspects.

I SPENT nearly all the evenings of last week at the Garrick Theatre, where the three Coquelins and their company were acting in Molière and in some famous modern pieces. Of Molière I saw "Tartuffe," "L'Avare," "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," "Les Précieuses Ridicules," and a condensed version of "Le Dépit Amoureux," in which the four acts of the original were cut down into two. Of these five plays only two are in verse, "Tartuffe" and "Le Dépit Amoureux," and I could not help wishing that the fashion of Molière's day had allowed him to write all his plays in prose. Molière was not a poet, and he knew that he was not a poet. When he ventured to write the most Shakespearean of his comedies, "L'Avare," in prose, "le même préjugé," Voltaire tells us, "qui avait fait tomber 'le Festin de Pierre,' parcequ'il était en prose, nuisit au succès de 'l'Avare.' Cependant le public qui, à la longue, se rend toujours au bon, finit par donner à cet ouvrage les applaudissements qu'il mérite. On comprit alors qu'il peut y avoir de forts bonnes comédies en prose." How infinitely finer, as prose, is the prose of "L'Avare" than the verse of "Tartuffe" as verse! In "Tartuffe" all the art of the actor is required to carry you over the artificial jangle of the alexandrines without allowing you to perceive too clearly that this man, who is certainly not speaking poetry, is speaking in rhyme. Molière was a great prose writer, but I do not remember a line of poetry in the whole of his work in verse. The whole temper of his mind was the temper of mind of the prose-writer. His wordly wisdom, his active

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philosophy, the very mainspring of his plots, are found, characteristically, in his valets and his servant-maids. He satirises the miser, the hypocrite, the bas-bleu, but he chuckles over Frosine and Gros-René; he loves them for their freedom of speech and their elastic minds, ready in words or deeds. They are his chorus, if the chorus might be imagined as directing the action.

But Molière has a weakness, too, for the bourgeois, and he has made M. Jourdain immortally delightful. There is not a really cruel touch in the whole character; we laugh at him so freely because Molière lets us laugh with such kindness. M. Jourdain has a robust joy in life; he carries off his absurdities by the simple good faith which he puts into them. When I speak of M. Jourdain I hardly know whether I am speaking of the character in Molière or of the character in Coquelin. Probably there is no difference. We get Molière's vast, succulent farce of the intellect rendered with an art like his own. If this, in every detail, is not what Molière meant, then so much the worse for Molière.

Molière is kind to his bourgeois, envelops him softly in satire as in cotton-wool, dandles him like a great baby; and Coquelin is without bitterness, stoops to make stupidity heroic, a distinguished stupidity. A study in comedy so profound, so convincing, so full of human nature and of the art-concealing art of the stage, has not been seen in our time. As Mascarille, in "Les Précieuses Ridicules," Coquelin becomes delicate and extravagant, a scented whirlwind; his parody is more splendid than the thing itself which he parodies, more full of fine show and nimble

## Coquelin and Molière: Some Aspects.

bravery. There is beauty in this broadly comic acting, the beauty of subtle detail. Words can do little to define a performance which is a constant series of little movements of the face, little intonations of the voice, a way of lolling in the chair, a way of speaking, of singing, of preserving the gravity of burlesque. In "Tartuffe" we get a form of comedy which is almost tragic, the horribly serious comedy of the hypocrite. Coquelin, who remakes his face, as by a prolonged effort of the muscles, for every part, makes, for this part, a great fish's face, heavy, suppressed, with lowered eyelids and a secret mouth, out of which steals at times some stealthy avowal. He has the movements of a great slug, or of a snail, if you will, putting out its head and drawing it back into its shell. The face waits and plots, with a sleepy immobility, covering a hard, indomitable will. It is like a drawing of Daumier, if you can imagine a drawing which renews itself at every instant, in a series of poses to which it is hardly necessary to add words.

I am told that Coquelin, in the creation of a part, makes his way slowly, surely, inwards, for the first few weeks of his performance, and that then the thing is finished, to the least intonation or gesture, and can be laid down and taken up at will, without a shade of difference in the interpretation. The part of Maître Jacques in "L'Avare," for instance, which he performed with such gusto and such certainty on Friday night, had not been acted by him for twenty years, and it was done, without rehearsal, in the midst of a company that required prompting at every moment. I suppose this method of moulding a part, as if

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in wet clay, and then allowing it to take hard, final form, is the method natural to the comedian, his right method. I can hardly think that the tragic actor should ever allow himself to become so much at home with his material ; that he dare ever allow his clay to become quite hard. He has to deal with the continually shifting stuff of the soul and of the passions, with nature at its least generalised moments. The comic actor deals with nature for the most part generalised, with things palpably absurd, with characteristics that strike the intelligence, not with emotions that touch the heart or the senses. He comes to more definite and to more definable results, on which he may rest, confident that what has made an audience laugh once will make it laugh always, laughter being a physiological thing, wholly independent of mood.

In thinking of some excellent comic actors of our own, I am struck by the much greater effort which they seem to make in order to drive their points home, and in order to get what they think variety. Sir Charles Wyndham is the only English actor I can think of at the moment who does not make unnecessary grimaces, who does not insist on acting when the difficult thing is not to act. In "Tartuffe" Coquelin stands motionless for five minutes at a time, without change of expression, and yet nothing can be more expressive than his face at those moments. In Chopin's G Minor Nocturne, Op. 15, there is an F held for three bars, and when Rubinstein played the Nocturne, says Mr. Huneker in his instructive and delightful book on Chopin, he prolonged the tone, "by some miraculous means," so that "it swelled and diminished, and went

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singing into D, as if the instrument were an organ." It is that power of sustaining an expression, unchanged, and yet always full of living significance, that I find in Coquelin. It is part of his economy, the economy of the artist. The improviser despairs economy, as much as the artist cherishes it. Coquelin has some half-dozen complete variations of the face he has composed for *Tartuffe*; no more than that, with no insignificances of expression thrown away; but each variation is a new point of view, from which we see the whole character.

## Réjane and Jane Hading.

THE genius of Réjane is a kind of finesse : it is a flavour, and all the ingredients of the dish may be named without defining it. The thing is Parisian, but that is only to say that it unites nervous force with a wicked ease and mastery of charm. It speaks to the senses through the brain, as much as to the brain through the senses. It is the feminine equivalent of intellect. It "magnetises our poor vertebræ," in Baudelaire's phrase, because it is sex and yet not instinct. It is sex civilised, under direction, playing a part, as we say of others than those on the stage. It calculates, and is unerring. It has none of the vulgar warmth of mere passion, none of its health or simplicity. It leaves a little red sting where it has kissed. And it intoxicates us by its appeal to so many sides of our nature at once. We are thrilled, and we admire, and are almost coldly appreciative, and yet aglow with the response of the blood. I have found myself applauding with tears in my eyes. The feeling and the critical approval came together, hand in hand : neither counteracted the other.

Réjane can be vulgar, as nature is vulgar : she has all the instincts of the human animal, of the animal woman, whom man will never quite civilise. There is no doubt of it, nature lacks taste ; and woman, who is so near to nature, lacks taste in the emotions. Réjane, in "Sapho" or in "Zaza" for instance, is woman naked and shameless, loving and suffering with all her nerves and muscles, a gross, pitiable, horribly human thing, whose direct appeal, like that of a sick animal, seizes you by the throat at the instant in



Rejane



## Réjane and Jane Hading.

which it reaches your eyes and ears. More than any actress she is the human animal without disguise or evasion ; with all the instincts, all the natural cries and movements. In "Sapho" or "Zaza" she speaks the language of the senses, no more ; and her acting reminds you of all that you may possibly have forgotten of how the senses speak when they speak through an ignorant woman in love. It is like an accusing confirmation of some of one's guesses at truth, before the realities of the flesh and of the affections of the flesh. Scepticism is no longer possible : the thing is before you, abominably real, a disquieting and irrefutable thing, which speaks with its own voice, as it has never spoken on the stage through any other actress.

In "Zaza," a play made for Réjane by two playwrights who had set themselves humbly to a task, the task of fitting her with a part, she is seen doing "Sapho" over again, with a difference. Zaza is a vulgar woman, a woman without instruction or experience ; she has not known poets and been the model of a great sculptor ; she comes straight from the boards of a café-concert to the kept woman's house in the country. She has caught her lover vulgarly, to win a bet ; and, to the end, you realise that she is, well, a woman who would do that. She has no depth of passion, none of Sapho's roots in the earth ; she has a "*béguin*" for Dufresne, she will drop everything else for it, such as it is, and she is capable of good, hearty suffering. Réjane gives her to us as she is, in all her commonness. The picture is full of humour ; it is, as I so often feel with Réjane, a Forain. Like Forain, she uses her material without ever being absorbed by it, without relaxing her impersonal artistic energy. In being

## Réjane and Jane Hading.

Zaza, she is so far from being herself (what is the self of a great actress?) that she has invented a new way of walking, as well as new tones and grimaces. There is not an effect in the play which she has not calculated; only, she has calculated every effect so exactly that the calculation is not seen. When you watch Mme. Jane Hading, you see her effects coming, several seconds before they are there; when they come, they come neatly, but with no surprise in them, and therefore with no conviction. There lies all the difference between the actress who is an actress equally by her temperament and by her brain and the actress who has only the brain (and, with Mme. Hading, beauty) to rely on. Everything that Réjane can think of she can do; thought translates itself instantly into feeling, and the embodied impulse is before you. Mme. Hading knows so well how everything should be done; she knows just how Sarah Bernhardt, if not nature, would do it; and she gives you a series of the most admirable lifeless studies, in which only her eyes live with a vehement personal life of their own.

In watching Mme. Hading I am sometimes reminded of Mrs. Kendal. Mme. Hading is a woman of strange, attractive beauty. There is the mass of bronze hair, there are the square lines of the face, the level eyebrows, and sullen, suppressed eyes, the square shoulders, the fine, heavy lines of the neck and chin. And it is no empty or expressionless beauty, it is a beauty full of some enigmatical meaning. But Mrs. Kendal is the better actress, because she is able to persuade a greater number of people that her deliberation is instinctive, although in both there is the same essential



Jane Hardinge



## Réjane and Jane Hading.

artificiality. Both try to do by a careful method what can only be done, as Réjane does it, by a method plus something else. That something else is genius, perhaps; but if the word genius sounds a little vague, let me say that it is vitality, temperament, sincerity. When Mme. Hading is perfectly quiet, when she is thinking, making up her mind, she is often admirable; but see her when she has to show acute emotion. There is, first, the contraction of the cat about to spring, and there is a very splutter of simulated energy, with the elegant collapse at the end. Now she turns on her voice, now she turns it off; she seems to be doing just what an excited woman would do, and yet you are never sorry, never even interested. You say: "Yes, that was really very well done," but you say it coldly; the actress has only acted. When Réjane is Zaza, she acts, and is the woman she acts; and you have to think, before you remember how elaborate a science goes to the making of that thrill which you are almost cruelly enjoying.

## Sir Henry Irving.

As I watched, at the Lyceum, the sad and eager face of Duse, leaning forward out of a box, and gazing at the eager and gentle face of Irving, I could not help contrasting the two kinds of acting summed up in those two faces. The play was "Olivia," W. G. Wills' poor and stagey version of "The Vicar of Wakefield," in which, however, not even the lean intelligence of a modern playwright could quite banish the homely and gracious and tender charm of Goldsmith. As Dr. Primrose, Irving was almost at his best ; that is to say, not at his greatest, but at his most equable level of good acting. All his distinction was there, his nobility, his restraint, his fine convention. For Irving represents the old school of acting, just as Duse represents the new school. To Duse, acting is a thing almost wholly apart from action ; she thinks on the stage, scarcely moves there ; when she feels emotion, it is her chief care not to express it with emphasis, but to press it down into her soul, until only the pained reflection of it glimmers out of her eyes and trembles in the hollows of her cheeks. To Irving, on the contrary, acting is all that the word literally means ; it is an art of sharp, detached, yet always delicate, movement ; he crosses the stage with intention, as he intentionally adopts a fine, crabbed, personal, highly conventional elocution of his own ; he is an actor, and he acts, keeping nature, or the too close resemblance of nature, carefully out of his composition.

With Miss Terry there is only the personal charm of a very natural nature, which has become deliciously sophisti-

## Sir Henry Irving.

cated. She is the eternal girl, and she can never grow old ; one might say, she can never grow up. She learns her part, taking it quite artificially, as a part to be learnt ; and then, at her frequent moments of forgetfulness, charms us into delight, though never into conviction, by a gay abandonment to the self of a passing moment. Irving's acting is almost a science, and it is a science founded on tradition. It is in one sense his personality that makes him what he is, the only actor on the English stage who has a touch of genius. But he has not gone to himself to invent an art wholly personal, wholly new ; his acting is no interruption of an intense inner life, but a craftsmanship into which he has put all he has to give. It is an art wholly of rhetoric, that is to say wholly external ; his emotion moves to slow music, crystallises into an attitude, dies upon a long-drawn-out word. He appeals to us, to our sense of what is expected, to our accustomed sense of the logic, not of life, but of life as we have always seen it on the stage, by his way of taking snuff, of taking out his pocket-handkerchief, of lifting his hat, of crossing his legs. He has observed life in order to make his own version of life, using the stage as his medium, and accepting the traditional aids and limitations of the stage.

Take him in one of his typical parts, in "Louis XI." His Louis XI. is a masterpiece of grotesque art. It is a study in senility, and it is the grotesque art of the thing which saves it from becoming painful. This shrivelled carcase, from which age, disease, and fear have picked all the flesh, leaving the bare framework of bone and the drawn and cracked covering of yellow skin, would be unendurable

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in its irreverent copy of age if it were not so obviously a picture, with no more malice than there is in the delicate lines and fine colours of a picture. The figure is at once Punch and the oldest of the Chelsea pensioners ; it distracts one between pity, terror, and disgust, but is altogether absorbing ; one watches it as one would watch some feeble ancient piece of mechanism, still working, which may snap at any moment. In such a personation, make-up becomes a serious part of art. It is the picture that magnetises us, and every wrinkle seems to have been studied in movement ; the hands act almost by themselves, as if every finger were a separate actor. The passion of fear, the instinct of craft, the malady of suspicion, in a frail old man who has power over every one but himself : that is what Sir Henry Irving represents, in a performance which is half precise physiology, half palpable artifice, but altogether a unique thing in art.

See him in “The Merchant of Venice.” His Shylock is noble and sordid, pathetic and terrifying. It is one of his great parts, made up of pride, stealth, anger, minute and varied picturesqueness, and a diabolical subtlety. Whether he paws at his cloak, or clutches upon the handle of his stick, or splutters hatred, or cringes before his prey, or shakes with lean and wrinkled laughter, he is always the great part and the great actor. See him as Mephistopheles in “Faust.” The Lyceum performance is a superb pantomime, with one overpowering figure drifting through it and in some sort directing it, the red-plumed devil Mephistopheles, who, in Sir Henry Irving’s impersonation of him, becomes a kind of weary spirit, a melancholy image of unhappy

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pride, holding himself up to the laughter of inferior beings, with the old acknowledgment that "the devil is an ass." A head like the head of Dante, shown up by coloured lights, and against chromo-lithographic backgrounds, while all the diabolic intelligence is set to work on the cheap triumph of wheedling a widow and screwing Rhenish and Tokay with a gimlet out of an inn table: it is partly Goethe's fault, and partly the fault of Wills, and partly the lowering trick of the stage. Mephistopheles is not really among Irving's great parts, but it is among his picturesque parts. With his restless strut, a blithe and aged tripping of the feet to some not quite human measure, he is like some spectral marionette, playing a game only partly his own. For such a part no mannerism can seem unnatural, and the image with its solemn mask lives in a kind of galvanic life of its own, seductively, with some mocking suggestion of his "cousin the snake." Here and there some of the old power is now lacking; but whatever was once subtle and insinuating remains.

Shakespeare at the Lyceum is always a magnificent spectacle, and "Coriolanus," the last Shakespearean revival there, was a magnificent spectacle. It is a play made up principally of one character and a crowd, the crowd being a sort of moving background, treated in Shakespeare's large and scornful way. A stage crowd at the Lyceum always gives one a sense of exciting movement, and this Roman rabble did all that was needed to show off the almost solitary splendour of Coriolanus. He is the proudest man in Shakespeare, and Sir Henry Irving is at his best when he embodies pride. His conception of the part was masterly:

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it had imagination, nobility, quietude. With opportunity for ranting in every second speech, he never ranted, but played what might well have been a roaring part with a kind of gentleness. With every opportunity for extravagant gesture, he stood, as the play seemed to foam about him, like a rock against which the foam beats. Made up as a kind of Roman Moltke, the lean, thoughtful soldier, he spoke throughout with a slow, contemptuous enunciation, as of one only just not too lofty to sneer. Restrained in scorn, he kept throughout an attitude of disdainful pride, the face, the eyes, set, while only his mouth twitched, seeming to chew his words, with the disgust of one swallowing a painful morsel. Where other actors would have raved, he spoke with bitter humour, a humour that seemed to hurt the speaker, the concise, active humour of the soldier, putting his words rapidly into deeds. And his pride was an intellectual pride; the weakness of a character, but the angry dignity of a temperament. I have never seen Irving so restrained, so much an artist, so faithfully interpretative of a masterpiece. Something of energy, no doubt, was lacking; but everything was there, except the emphasis which I most often wish away in acting.

## Duse in Some of Her Parts.

### I.

THE acting of Duse is a criticism; poor work dissolves away under it, as under a solvent acid. Not one of the plays which she has brought with her is a play on the level of her intelligence and of her capacity for expressing deep human emotion. Take "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." It is a very able play, it is quite an interesting glimpse into a particular kind of character, but it is only able, and it is only a glimpse. Paula, as conceived by Mr. Pinero, is a thoroughly English type of woman, the nice, slightly morbid, somewhat unintelligently capricious woman who has "gone wrong," and who finds it quite easy, though a little dull, to go right when the chance is offered to her. She is observed from the outside, very keenly observed; her ways, her surface tricks of emotion, are caught; she is a person whom we know or remember. But what is skin-deep in Paula as conceived by Mr. Pinero becomes a real human being, a human being with a soul, in the Paula conceived by Duse. Paula as played by Duse is sad and sincere, where the English-woman is only irritable; she has the Italian simplicity and directness in place of that terrible English capacity for uncertainty in emotion and huffiness in manner. She brings profound tragedy, the tragedy of a soul which has sinned and suffered, and tries vainly to free itself from the consequences of its deeds, into a study of circumstances in their ruin of material happiness. And, frankly, the play cannot stand it. When this woman bows down under her fate in

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so terrible a spiritual loneliness, realising that we cannot fight against Fate, and that Fate is only the inevitable choice of our own natures, we wait for the splendid words which shall render so great a situation; and no splendid words come. The situation, to the dramatist, has been only a dramatic situation. Here is Duse, a chalice for the wine of imagination, but the chalice remains empty. It is almost painful to see her waiting for the words that do not come, offering tragedy to us in her eyes, and with her hands, and in her voice, only not in the words that she says or in the details of the action which she is condemned to follow.

See Mrs. Patrick Campbell playing "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," and you will see it played exactly according to Mr. Pinero's intention, and played brilliantly enough to distract our notice from what is lacking in the character. A fantastic and delightful contradiction, half gamine, half Burne-Jones, she confuses our judgment, as a Paula in real life might, and leaves us attracted and repelled, and, above all, interested. But Duse has no resources outside simple human nature. If she cannot convince you by the thing in itself, she cannot disconcert you by a paradox about it. Well, this passionately sincere acting, this one real person moving about among the dolls of the piece, shows up all that is mechanical, forced, and unnatural in the construction of a play never meant to withstand the searchlight of this woman's creative intelligence. Whatever is theatrical and obvious starts out into sight. The good things are transfigured, the bad things merely discovered. And so, by a kind of naïveté in the acceptance of emotion for all it

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might be, instead of for the little that it is, by an almost perverse simplicity and sincerity in the treatment of a superficial and insincere character; Duse plays "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" in the grand manner, destroying the illusion of the play as she proves over again the supremacy of her own genius.

### II.

WHILE I watch Duse's Magda, I can conceive, for the time, of no other. Realising the singer as being just such an artist as herself, she plays the part with hardly a suggestion of the stage, except the natural woman's intermittent loathing for it. She has been a great artist; yes, but that is nothing to her. "I am I," as she says, and she has lived. And we see before us, all through the play, a woman who has lived with all her capacity for joy and sorrow, who has thought with all her capacity for seeing clearly what she is unable, perhaps, to help doing. She does not act, that is, explain herself to us, emphasise herself for us. She lets us overlook her, with a supreme unconsciousness, a supreme affectation of unconsciousness, which is of course very conscious art, an art so perfect as to be almost literally deceptive. I do not know if she plays with exactly the same gestures night after night, but I can quite imagine it. She has certain little caresses, the half awkward caresses of real people, not the elegant curves and convolutions of the stage, which always enchant me beyond any mimetic movements I have ever seen. She has a way of letting her voice apparently get beyond her own control, and of looking as if emotion has left her face expressionless, as it often leaves

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the faces of real people, thus carrying the illusion of reality almost further than it is possible to carry it, only never quite.

I was looking this afternoon at Whistler's portrait of Carlyle at the Guildhall, and I find in both the same final art : that art of perfect expression, perfect suppression, perfect balance of every quality, so that a kind of negative thing becomes a thing of the highest achievement. Name every fault to which the art of the actor is liable, and you will have named every fault which is lacking in Duse. And the art of the actor is in itself so much a compound of false emphasis and every kind of wilful exaggeration, that to have any negative merit is to have already a merit very positive. Having cleared away all that is not wanted, Duse begins to create. And she creates out of life itself an art which no one before her had ever imagined : not realism, not a copy, but the thing itself, the evocation of thoughtful life, the creation of the world over again, as actual and beautiful a thing as if the world had never existed.

### III.

"LA GIOCONDA" is the first play in which Duse has had beautiful words to speak, and a poetical conception of character to render ; and her acting in it is more beautiful and more poetical than it was possible for it to be in "Magda," or in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." But the play is not a good play ; at its best it is lyrical rather than dramatic, and at its worst it is horrible with a vulgar material horror. The end of "Titus Andronicus" is not

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so revolting as the end of "La Gioconda." D'Annunzio has put as a motto on his title-page the sentence of Leonardo da Vinci: "Cosa bella mortal passa, e non d'arte," and the action of the play is intended as a symbol of the possessing and destroying mastery of art and of beauty. But the idea is materialised into a form of grotesque horror, and all the charm of the atmosphere and the grace of the words cannot redeem a conclusion so inartistic in its painfulness. But, all the same, the play is the work of a poet, it brings imagination upon the stage, and it gives Duse an opportunity of being her finest self. All the words she speaks are sensitive words, she moves in the midst of beautiful things, her whole life seems to flow into a more harmonious rhythm, for all the violence of its sorrow and suffering. Her acting at the end, all through the inexcusable brutality of the scene in which she appears before us with her mutilated hands covered under long hanging sleeves, is, in the dignity, intensity, and humanity of its pathos, a thing of beauty, of a profound kind of beauty, made up of pain, endurance, and the irony of pitiable things done in vain. Here she is no longer transforming a foreign conception of character into her own conception of what character should be; she is embodying the creation of an Italian, of an artist, and a creation made in her honour. D'Annunzio's tragedy is, in the final result, bad tragedy, but it is the failure of a far higher order than such successes as Mr. Pinero's. It is written with a consciousness of beauty, with a feverish energy which is still energy, with a sense of what is imaginative in the facts of actual life. It is written in Italian which is a continual delight to the

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ear, prose which sounds as melodious as verse, prose to which, indeed, all dramatic probability is sacrificed. And Duse seems to acquire a new subtlety, as she speaks at last words in themselves worthy of her speaking. It is as if she at last spoke her own language.

### IV.

DUMAS fils has put his best work into the novel of "La Dame aux Camélias," which is a kind of slighter, more superficial, more sentimental, more modern, but less universal "Manon Lescaut." There is a certain artificial, genuinely artificial kind of nature in it: if not "true to life," it is true to certain lives. But the play lets go this hold, such as it is, on reality, and becomes a mere stage convention as it crosses the footlights; a convention which is touching, indeed, far too full of pathos, human in its exaggerated way, but no longer to be mistaken, by the least sensitive of hearers, for great or even fine literature. And the sentiment in it is not so much human as French, a factitious idealism in depravity which one associates peculiarly with Paris. Marguerite Gautier is the type of the nice woman who sins and loves, and becomes regenerated by an unnatural kind of self-sacrifice, done for French family reasons. She is the Parisian whom Sarah Bernhardt impersonates perfectly in that hysterical and yet deliberate manner which is made for such impersonations. Duse, as she does always, turns her into quite another kind of woman; not the light woman, to whom love has come suddenly, as a new sentiment coming suddenly into her life, but the simple,

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instinctively loving woman, in whom we see nothing of the demi-monde, only the natural woman in love. Throughout the play she has moments, whole scenes, of absolute greatness, as fine as anything she has ever done : but there are other moments when she seems to carry repression too far. Her pathos, as in the final scene, and at the end of the scene of the reception, where she repeats the one word "Armando" over and over again, in an amazed and agonising reproachfulness, is of the finest order of pathos. She appeals to us by a kind of goodness, much deeper than the sentimental goodness intended by Dumas. It is love itself that she gives us, love utterly unconscious of anything but itself, uncontaminated, unspoilt. She is Mlle. de Lespinasse rather than Marguerite Gautier ; a creature in whom ardour is as simple as breath, and devotion a part of ardour. Her physical suffering is scarcely to be noticed ; it is the suffering of her soul that Duse gives us. And she gives us this as if nature itself came upon the boards, and spoke to us without even the ordinary disguise of human beings in their intercourse with one another. Once more an artificial play becomes sincere ; once more the personality of a great impersonal artist dominates the poverty of her part ; we get one more revelation of a particular phase of Duse. And it would be unreasonable to complain that "*La Dame aux Camélias*" is really something quite different, something much inferior ; here we have at least a great emotion, a desperate sincerity, with all the thoughtfulness which can possibly accompany passion.

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V.

DUMAS, in a preface better than his play, tells us that "La Princesse Georges" is "a Soul in conflict with Instincts." But no, as he has drawn her, as he has placed her, she is only the theory of a woman in conflict with the mechanical devices of a plot. All these characters talk as they have been taught, and act according to the tradition of the stage. It is a double piece of mechanism, that is all; there is no creation of character, there is a kind of worldly wisdom throughout, but not a glimmer of imagination; argument drifts into sentiment, and sentiment returns into argument, without conviction; the end is no conclusion, but an arbitrary break in an action which we see continuing, after the curtain has fallen. And, as in "Fédora," Duse comes into the play resolved to do what the author has not done. Does she deliberately choose the plays most obviously not written for her in order to extort a triumph out of her enemies? Once more she acts consciously, openly, making every moment of an unreal thing real, by concentrating herself upon every moment as if it were the only one. The result is a performance miraculous in detail, and, if detail were everything, it would be a great part. With powdered hair, she is beautiful and a great lady; as the domesticated princess, she has all the virtues, and honesty itself, in her face and in her movements; she gives herself with a kind of really unreflecting thoughtfulness to every sentiment which is half her emotion. If such a woman could exist, and she could not, she would be that, precisely that. But just as we are beginning to believe, not only in her but in the play itself, in comes the spying lady's maid, or the valet

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who spies on the lady's maid, and we are in melodrama again, and among the strings of the marionettes. Where are the three stages, truth, philosophy, conscience, which Dumas offers to us in his preface as the three stages by which a work of dramatic art reaches perfection? Shown us by Duse, from moment to moment, yes; but in the piece, no, scarcely more than in "*Fédora*." So fatal is it to write for our instruction, as fatal as to write for our amusement. A work of art must suggest everything, but it must prove nothing. Bad imaginative work like "*La Gioconda*" is really, in its way, better than this unimaginative and theoretical falseness to life; for it at least shows us beauty, even though it degrades that beauty before our eyes. And Duse, of all actresses the nearest to nature, was born to create beauty, that beauty which is the deepest truth of natural things. Why does she after all only tantalise us, showing us little fragments of her soul under many disguises, but never giving us her whole self through the revealing medium of a masterpiece?

## VI.

"*FÉDORA*" is a play written for Sarah Bernhardt by the writer of plays for Sarah Bernhardt, and it contains the usual ingredients of that particular kind of sorcery: a Russian tigress, an assassination, a suicide, exotic people with impulses in conflict with their intentions, good working evil and evil working good, not according to a philosophical idea, but for the convenience of a melodramatic plot. As artificial, as far from life on the one hand and poetry on the

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other, as a jig of marionettes at the end of a string, it has the absorbing momentary interest of a problem in events. Character does not exist, only impulse and event. And Duse comes into this play with a desperate resolve to fill it with honest emotion, to be what a woman would really perhaps be if life turned melodramatic with her. Visibly, deliberately, she acts; "*Fédora*" is not to be transformed unawares into life. But her acting is like that finest kind of acting which we meet with in real life, when we are able to watch some choice scene of the human comedy being played before us. She becomes the impossible thing that *Fédora* is, and, in that tour de force, she does some almost impossible things by the way. There is a scene in which the blood fades out of her cheeks until they seem to turn to dry earth furrowed with wrinkles. She makes triumphant point after triumphant point (her intelligence being free to act consciously on this unintelligent matter), and we notice, more than in her finer parts, individual moments, gestures, tones: the attitude of her open hand upon a door, certain blind caresses with her fingers as they cling for the last time to her lover's cheeks, her face as she reads a letter, the art of her voice as she almost deliberately takes us in with these emotional artifices of Sardou. When it is all over, and we think of the Silvia of "*La Gioconda*," of the woman we divine under Magda and under Paula Tanqueray, it is with a certain sense of waste; for even Paula can be made to seem something which *Fédora* can never be made to seem. In "*Fédora*" we have a sheer, undisguised piece of stage-craft, without even the amount of psychological intention of Mr. Pinero, much less of

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Sudermann. It is a detective story with horrors, and it is far too positive and finished a thing to be transformed into something not itself. Sardou is a hard taskmaster ; he chains his slaves. Without nobility or even coherence of conception, without inner life or even a recognisable semblance of exterior life, the piece goes by clockwork ; you cannot make the hands go faster or slower, or bring its mid-day into agreement with the sun. A great actress, who is also a great intelligence, is seen accepting it, for its purpose, with contempt, as a thing to exercise her technical skill upon. As a piece of technical skill, Duse's acting in "*Fédora*" is as fine as anything she has done. It completes our admiration of her genius, as it proves to us that she can act to perfection a part in which the soul is left out of the question, in which nothing happens according to nature, and in which life is figured as a long attack of nerves, relieved by the occasional interval of an uneasy sleep.

## Pachmann, "Parsifal," and the "Pathetic Symphony."

THERE were no plays last week, and I was free to follow my own bent, and hear music instead. I went to two concerts, both of which interested me greatly: Mr. Robert Newman's Symphony Concert at the Queen's Hall on Ash Wednesday, and the Saturday Popular Concert at St. James's Hall. At the former I heard the Prelude, the Good Friday music, the Flower music, and the end of the music to the first act of "Parsifal," together with the "Pathetic Symphony" of Tschaikowsky; at the latter the Hess string quartet played Brahms and Schumann with admirable energy and precision, Mr. Plunket Greene sang Bach and Brahms finely, and M. de Pachmann played on the piano a Rondo of Mozart, the eighth Nocturne, and the first Impromptu of Chopin. I had gone to this latter concert entirely to hear Pachmann, because it seems to me that he is the only pianist who plays the piano as it ought to be played. I admit his limitations, I admit that he can only play certain things, but I contend that he is the greatest living pianist because he can play those things better than any other pianist can play anything. Pachmann is the Verlaine of pianists, and when I hear him I think of Verlaine reading his own verse, in a faint, reluctant voice, which you overheard. Other players have mastered the piano, Pachmann absorbs its soul, and it is only when he touches it that it really speaks in its own voice. Chopin wrote for the piano with a more perfect sense of his instrument than any other composer, and Pach-

## “Parsifal” and the Pathetic Symphony.

mann plays Chopin with an infallible sense of what Chopin meant to express in his music. He seems to touch the notes with a kind of agony of delight; his face twitches with the actual muscular contraction of the fingers as they suspend themselves in the very act of touch. I am told that Pachmann plays Chopin in a morbid way. Well, Chopin was morbid; there are fevers and cold sweats in his music; it is not healthy music, and it is not to be interpreted in a robust way. It must be played, as Pachmann plays it, somnambulistically, with a tremulous delicacy of intensity, as if it were a living thing on whose nerves one were operating, and as if every touch might mean life or death.

When I heard “Parsifal” at Bayreuth it seemed to me that this, more than any of Wagner’s music, must lose in being heard in the concert-hall, without its accompaniment of drama and spectacle. And I missed something, certainly, when I heard those extracts from it at the Queen’s Hall. The music was always beautiful music; it was, as good music must be, sufficient to itself; but as I listened to it I found myself unconsciously remembering the stage at Bayreuth, and the remembrance helped me to enjoy it. When I could not remember, I enjoyed it a little less.

The music of “Parsifal” has the abstract quality of Coventry Patmore’s odes. I cannot think of it except in terms of sight. Light surges up out of it, as out of unformed depths; light descends from it, as from the sky; it breaks into flashes and sparkles of light, it broadens out into a vast sea of light. It is almost metaphysical music; pure ideas take visible form, humanise themselves in a new kind of ecstasy. The ecstasy has still a certain fever in it;

## “Parsifal” and the Pathetic Symphony.

these shafts of light sometimes pierce the soul like a sword ; it is not peace, the peace of Bach, to whom music can give all he wants ; it is the unsatisfied desire of a kind of flesh of the spirit, and music is but a voice. “Parsifal” is religious music, but it is the music of a religion which had never before found expression. I have found in a motet of Vittoria one of the motives of “Parsifal,” almost note for note, and there is no doubt that Wagner owed much to Palestrina and his school. But even the sombre music of Vittoria does not plead and implore like Wagner’s. The outcry comes and goes, not only with the suffering of Amfortas, the despair of Kundry. This abstract music has human blood in it.

What Wagner has tried to do is to unite mysticism and the senses, to render mysticism through the senses. Mr. Wath-Dunton has pointed out that that is what Rossetti tried to do in painting. That mysterious intensity of expression which we see in the faces of Rossetti’s latest pictures has something of the same appeal as that insatiable crying-out of a carnal voice, somewhere in the depths of Wagner’s latest music.

In “Parsifal,” more perhaps than anywhere else in his work, Wagner realised the supreme importance of monotony, the effect that could be gained by the incessant repetition of a few ideas. All that music of the closing scene of Act I. is made out of two or three phrases, and it is by the finest kind of invention that those two or three phrases are developed, and repeated, and woven together into so splendid a tissue. And, in the phrases themselves, what severity, what bareness almost ! It is in their return upon themselves, their weighty reiteration, that their force and significance

## “Parsifal” and the Pathetic Symphony.

become revealed ; and if, as Neitzsche says, they end by hypnotising us, well, all art is a kind of hypnotic process, a cunning absorption of the will of another.

To pass from Wagner to Tschaikowsky, from “Parsifal” to the Pathetic Symphony, is like passing from a church in which priests are offering mass to a hut in which peasants are quarrelling, dancing, and making love. Tschaikowsky has both force and sincerity, but it is the force and sincerity of a ferocious child. He takes the orchestra in both hands, tears it to pieces, catches up a fragment of it here, a fragment of it there, masters it like an enemy ; he makes it do what he wants. But he uses his fist where Wagner touches with the tips of his fingers ; he shows ill-breeding after the manners of the supreme gentleman. Wagner can use the whole strength of the orchestra, and not make a noise : he never ends on a bang. But Tschaikowsky loves noise for its own sake ; he likes to pound the drum, and to hear the violins running up and down scales like acrobats. Wagner takes his rhythms from the sea, as in “Tristan,” from fire, as in parts of the “Ring,” from light, as in “Parsifal.” But Tschaikowsky deforms the rhythms of nature with the caprices of half-civilised impulses. He puts the frog-like dancing of the Russian peasant into his tunes ; he cries and roars like a child in a rage. He gives himself to you just as he is ; he is immensely conscious of himself and of his need to take you into his confidence. In your delight at finding any one so alive, you are inclined to welcome him without reserve, and to forget that a man of genius is not necessarily a great artist, and that, if he is not a great artist, he is not a satisfactory man of genius.

## Pachmann and the Piano.

WHEN I once wrote about Pachmann that he is the greatest living pianist, because he can play certain things better than any other pianist can play anything, I am convinced that I was strictly accurate. I have heard him again, at St. James's Hall, in a recital of nothing but Chopin music, and nothing but the best of Chopin. There was the Funeral March Sonata, the first Ballade, the Fantasia, the Berceuse, the most beautiful of the Nocturnes (Op. 37, No. 2), an exquisite Valse, there were three Mazurkas, three Preludes, and two Études. There were encores, interspersed with conversation, and there was the horrible *tour de force* of playing two pieces at the same time. Chopin's music, unlike most other piano music, exists on terms of perfect equality with the piano. And Pachmann, unlike most other pianists, exists on terms of perfect equality with Chopin's music. I have heard pianists who played Chopin in what they called a healthy way. The notes swung, spun, and clattered, with a heroic repercussion of sound, a hurrying reiteration of fury, signifying nothing. The piano stormed through the applause ; the pianist sat imperturbably, hammering. Well, I do not think any music should be played like that, not Liszt even. Liszt connives at the suicide, but with Chopin it is a murder. When Pachmann plays Chopin the music sings itself, as if without the intervention of an executant, of one who stands between the music and our hearing. The music has to intoxicate him before he can play with it ; then he becomes its comrade, in a kind of very serious game; himself, in short, that is to say inhuman. His



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fingers have in them a cold magic, as of soulless elves who have sold their souls for beauty. And this beauty, which is not of the soul, is not of the flesh ; it is a sea-change, the life of the foam on the edge of the depths. Or it transports him into some mid-region of the air, between hell and heaven, where he hangs, listening. He listens at all his senses. The dew, as well as the raindrop, has a sound for him.

Pachmann gives you pure music, not states of soul or of temperament, not interpretations, but echoes. He gives you the notes in their own atmosphere, where they live for him an individual life, which has nothing to do with emotions or ideas. Thus he does not need to translate out of two languages : first, from sound to emotion, temperament, what you will ; then from that back again to sound. The notes exist ; it is enough that they exist. They mean for him just the sound and nothing else. You see his fingers feeling after it, his face calling to it, his whole body imploring it. Sometimes it comes upon him in such a burst of light that he has to cry aloud, in order that he may endure the ecstasy. You see him speaking to the music ; he lifts his finger, that you too may listen for it not less attentively. But it is always the thing itself that he evokes for you, as it rises flower-like out of silence, and comes to exist in the world. Every note lives, with the whole vitality of its existence. To Swinburne every word lives, just in the same way ; when he says "light," he sees the sunrise ; when he says "fire," he is warmed through all his blood. And so Pachmann calls up, with this ghostly magic of his, the innermost life of music. I do not think he has ever put an

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intention into Chopin. Chopin had no intentions. He was a man, and he suffered ; and he was a musician, and he wrote music ; and very likely George Sand, and Majorca, and his disease, and Scotland, and the woman who sang to him when he died, are all in the music ; but that is not the question. The notes sob and shiver, stab you like a knife, caress you like the fur of a cat ; and are beautiful sound, the most beautiful sound that has been called out of the piano. Pachmann calls it out for you, disinterestedly, easily, with ecstasy, inevitably ; you do not realise that he has had difficulties to conquer, that music is a thing for acrobats and athletes. He smiles to you, that you may realise how beautiful the notes are, when they trickle out of his fingers like singing water ; he adores them and his own playing, as you do, and as if he had nothing to do with them but to pour them out of his hands.

The art of the pianist, after all, lies mainly in one thing, touch. It is by the skill, precision, and beauty of his touch that he makes music at all ; it is by the quality of his touch that he evokes a more or less miraculous vision of sound for us. Touch gives him his only means of expression ; it is to him what relief is to the sculptor or what values are to the painter. To "understand," as it is called, a piece of music, is not so much as the beginning of good playing ; if you do not understand it with your fingers, what shall your brain profit you ? In the interpretation of music all action of the brain which does not translate itself perfectly in touch is useless. You may as well not think at all as not think in the terms of your instrument, and the piano responds to one thing only, touch. Now Pachmann, beyond all other pianists, has

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this magic. When he plays it, the piano ceases to be a compromise. He makes it as living and penetrating as the violin, as responsive and elusive as the clavichord.

And now, if I am to suggest the last shade of what I want to suggest, if I am to evoke Pachmann as I seem to realise him, I must be allowed to change my medium of expression. This, which may be called "The Chopin-Player," is an attempt at a somewhat closer interpretation than I can give in prose :

The sounds torture me : I see them in my brain ;  
They spin a flickering web of living threads,  
Like butterflies upon the garden beds,  
Nets of bright sound. I follow them : in vain.  
I must not brush the least dust from their wings :  
They die of a touch ; but I must capture them,  
Or they will turn to a caressing flame,  
And lick my soul up with their flutterings.

The sounds torture me : I count them with my eyes,  
I feel them like a thirst between my lips ;  
Is it my body or my soul that cries  
With little coloured mouths of sound, and drips  
In these bright drops that turn to butterflies  
Dying delicately at my finger tips ?

# Maeterlinck, "Everyman" and the Japanese Players.

## I. "Pelléas and Mélisande."

"Pelléas and Mélisande" is the most beautiful of Maeterlinck's plays, and to say this is to say that it is the most beautiful contemporary play. Maeterlinck's theatre of marionettes, who are at the same time children and spirits, at once more simple and more abstract than real people, is the reaction of the imagination against the wholly prose theatre of Ibsen, into which life comes nakedly, cruelly, subtly, but without distinction, without poetry. Maeterlinck has invented plays which are pictures, in which the crudity of action is subdued into misty outlines. People with strange names, living in impossible places, where there are only woods and fountains, and towers by the sea-shore, and ancient castles, where there are no towns, and where the common crowd of the world is shut out of sight and hearing, move like quiet ghosts across the stage, mysterious to us and not less mysterious to one another. They are all lamenting because they do not know, because they cannot understand, because their own souls are so strange to them, and each other's souls like pitiful enemies, giving deadly wounds unwillingly. They are always in dread, because they know that nothing is certain in the world or in their own hearts, and they know that love most often does the work of hate and that hate is sometimes tenderer than love. In "Pelléas and Mélisande" we have two innocent lovers, to whom love is guilt; we have blind vengeance, aged and

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helpless wisdom ; we have the conflict of passions fighting in the dark, destroying what they desire most in the world. And out of this tragic tangle Maeterlinck has made a play which is too full of beauty to be painful. We feel an exquisite sense of pity, so impersonal as to be almost healing, as if our own sympathy had somehow set right the wrongs of the play.

And this play, translated with delicate fidelity by Mr. Mackail, was acted yesterday afternoon by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Mr. Martin Harvey, and others, to the accompaniment of M. Fauré's music, and in the midst of scenery which gave a series of beautiful pictures, worthy of the play. Mrs. Campbell, in whose art there is so much that is pictorial, has never been so pictorial as in the character of Mélisande. At the beginning I thought she was acting with more effort and less effect than in the original performance ; but as the play went on she abandoned herself more and more simply to the part she was acting, and in the death scene had a kind of quiet, poignant, reticent perfection. A plaintive figure out of tapestry, a child out of a nursery tale, she made one feel at once the remoteness and the humanity of this waif of dreams, the little princess who does know that it is wrong to love. In the great scene by the fountain in the park, Mrs. Campbell expressed the supreme unconsciousness of passion, both in face and voice, as no other English actress could have done ; in the death scene she expressed the supreme unconsciousness of innocence with the same beauty and the same intensity. Her palpitating voice, in which there is something like the throbbing of a wounded bird, seemed to speak the simple and beautiful

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words as if they had never been said before. And that beauty and strangeness in her, which make her a work of art in herself, seemed to find the one perfect opportunity for their expression. The only actress on our stage whom we go to see as we would go to see a work of art, she acts Pinero and the rest as if under a disguise. Here, dressed in wonderful clothes of no period, speaking delicate, almost ghostly words, she is herself, her rarer self. And Mr. Martin Harvey, who can be so simple, so passionate, so full of the warmth of charm, seemed until almost the end of the play to have lost the simple fervour which he had once shown in the part of Pelléas ; he posed, spoke without sincerity, was conscious of little but his attitudes. But in the great love scene by the fountain in the park he had recovered sincerity, he forgot himself, remembering Pelléas ; and that great love scene was acted with a sense of the poetry and a sense of the human reality of the thing, as no one on the London stage but Mr. Harvey and Mrs. Campbell could have acted it. No one else, except Mr. Arliss as the old servant, was good ; the acting was not sufficiently monotonous, with that fine monotony which is part of the secret of Maeterlinck. These busy actors occupied themselves in making points, instead of submitting passively to the passing through them of profound emotions, and the betrayal of these emotions in a few, reticent, and almost unwilling words.

## II. "Everyman."

THE Elizabethan Stage Society's performance of "Everyman" deserves a place of its own among the stage

## “ Everyman.”

performances of our time. “ Everyman” took one into a kind of very human church, a church in the midst of the market-place, like those churches in Italy, in which people seem so much at home. The verse is quaint, homely, not so archaic when it is spoken as one might suppose in reading it ; the metre is regular in beat, but very irregular in the number of syllables, and the people who spoke it so admirably under Mr. Poel’s careful training had not been trained to scan it as well as they articulated it. “ Everyman” may be read, not quite in its entirety, in Mr. Pollard’s collection of “ Moralities and Miracle Plays,” and I hope this performance will send readers to that well-packed storehouse. The piece is certainly the finest, simplest, gravest of all the moralities in the book ; it is a kind of “ Pilgrim’s Progress,” conceived with a daring and reverent imagination, so that God himself comes quite naturally upon the stage, and speaks out of a clothed and painted image. Death, lean and bare-boned, rattles his drum and trips fantastically across the stage of the earth, leading his dance ; Everyman is seen on his way to the grave, taking leave of Riches, Fellowship, Kindred, and Goods (each personified with his attributes), escorted a little way by Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and the Five Wits, and then abandoned by them, and then going down into the grave with no other attendance than that of Knowledge and Good Deeds. The pathos and sincerity of the little drama were shown finely and adequately by the simple cloths and bare boards of a Shakespearean stage, and by the solemn chanting of the actors and their serious, unspoilt simplicity in acting. Miss Wynne-Matthison in the part of Everyman acted with

## “ Everyman.”

remarkable power and subtlety; she had the complete command of her voice, as so few actors or actresses have, and she was able to give vocal expression to every shade of meaning which she had apprehended.

### III. The Japanese Players.

WHEN I first saw the Japanese players I suddenly discovered the meaning of Japanese art, so far as it represents human beings. You know the scarcely human oval which represents a woman's face, with the help of a few thin curves for eyelids and mouth. Well, that convention, as I had always supposed it to be, that geometrical symbol of a face, turns out to be precisely the face of the Japanese woman when she is made up. So the monstrous entanglements of men fighting, which one sees in the pictures, the circling of the two-handed sword, the violence of feet in combat, are seen to be after all the natural manner of Japanese warfare. This unrestrained energy of body comes out in the expression of every motion. Men spit and sneeze and snuffle, without consciousness of dignity or hardly of humanity, under the influence of fear, anger or astonishment. When the merchant is awaiting Shylock's knife he trembles convulsively, continuously, from head to feet, unconscious of everything but death. When Shylock has been thwarted, he stands puckering his face into a thousand grimaces, like a child who has swallowed medicine. It is the emotion of children, naked sensation, not yet clothed by civilisation. Only the body speaks in it, the mind is absent; and the body abandons itself completely to the animal force of its



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## The Japanese Players.

instincts. With a great artist like Sada Yacco in the death scene of "The Geisha and the Knight," the effect is overwhelming; the whole woman dies before one's sight, life ebbs visibly out of cheeks and eyes and lips; it is death as not even Sarah Bernhardt has shown us death. There are moments, at other times and with other performers, when it is difficult not to laugh, at some cat-like or ape-like trick of these painted puppets who talk a toneless language, breathing through their words as they whisper or chant them. They are swathed like barbaric idols, in splendid robes without grace; they dance with fans, with fingers, running, hopping, lifting their feet, if they lift them, with the heavy delicacy of the elephant; they sing in discords, striking or plucking a few hoarse notes on stringed instruments, and beating on untuned drums. Neither they nor their clothes have beauty, to a Western taste; they have strangeness, the charm of something which seems to us capricious, almost outside Nature. In our ignorance of their words, of what they mean to one another, of the very way in which they see one another, we shall best appreciate their rarity by looking on them frankly as pictures, which we can see with all the imperfections of a Western misunderstanding.

## Music, Staging, and Some Acting.

THE Purcell Society deserves gratitude for giving us, at the Great Queen Street Theatre, Purcell's "Masque of Love" and Handel's "Acis and Galatea." It would have deserved a less carefully limited gratitude if it had given us the music as it was originally written, for a thin orchestra of strings and wood-wind, and a harpsichord filling up the harmonies. Mr. Martin Shaw has done in the case of Purcell, it is true, only what Mozart did before him in the case of Handel. Well, no less a poet than Dryden re-wrote Chaucer, and we no longer read<sup>f</sup> Dryden's version. This bringing of the orchestra up to date is precisely the same as the modernising of Chaucer. It may be done as carefully as you please; something, colour, atmosphere, some really interesting technical quality, is sure to go. Again, an orchestra only half trained to play together, and singers only half trained to keep with the orchestra, are not likely to do full justice to the music which they do their best to interpret. But, after all, it was not so much for the music as for the staging that I went twice in the week to the Great Queen Street Theatre. Mr. Gordon Craig has already staged an opera of Purcell, the "Dido and Æneas," and he is now presenting the "Masque of Love" for the second time. The critics, I am told, have been making merry over this new art which comes so suddenly upon them; they have complained that Handel did not intend his music to be staged in a conventional manner. I do not suppose Handel cared how his music was staged; his music, certainly, is not heard to advantage on any con-

## Music, Staging, and Some Acting.

ceivable kind of stage, because it was written to fit a cramped form, and with only occasional suggestions of real dramatic feeling. But there is no doubt that Mr. Craig's method of draping the stage with plain cloths, of lighting it from the top, of doing away with realistic imitations of scenery, and tailor-made imitations of clothes, is a method capable of infinite extension, capable already of giving infinite delight to the eye. His arrangement of the "Masque of Love," an arrangement at once simple and fantastic, always new and surprising, has a touch of genius. Here he comes into competition with no realities, has no author's intentions to be uncertain about, and is therefore wholly himself, and wholly delightful.

I was interested to hear some of Handel's and of Purcell's music, so soon after hearing the concert at the Queen's Hall on March 8, when Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was very well and solidly rendered by Mr. Wood (despite some uncertainty among the singers in the quartet), a firework concerto of Saint-Saëns' done more than justice to by Mr. Mark Hambourg, and (here was the more piquant part of the contrast) the orchestral fantasia of Richard Strauss, "Don Juan," played for only the second time, I think, in England. The new problem in music, which has only just reached us from Germany, where it has long been discussed with strenuous seriousness, is the problem of Richard Strauss. Books have been written about him in Germany, enthusiasts have accepted his music as the new music. I had not heard anything of his until this performance of "Don Juan" at the Queen's Hall. Mr. Henry Wood gave it admirably; it interested me while it was going on,

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and yet I came away puzzled. It had ideas, and it rendered sensations. But were those ideas very profound, very sincere, very personal? and were those sensations really musical sensations? Strauss gives a quotation from Lenau at the beginning of his score, and from this we know that we have to expect two motives: the motive of passion and the motive of loneliness. Knowing this, I felt the passion and the loneliness in the music. But when I had come away, and all the notes of the music had evaporated like bubbles, I began to wonder whether I had only felt them in a literary way, whether I had not put them for myself into a certainly somewhat formless mass which the composer had handed over to me, perhaps for my own shaping. The music was not a wholly new thing; it reminded me of both Wagner and Tschaikowsky; though it had more of the wind of Tschaikowsky than of the waves of Wagner. And, what was distressing, it reminded me sometimes of "*L'Enfant Prodigue*," of that crude noting of sensation, one nervous thrill following another, in a merely clever imitation of natural things. That emphatic, heavy-handed way with the orchestra, was it masterly, or was it the wrong kind of emphasis, the mere point and pungency of antithesis? I have not yet quite made up my mind; I must hear more of Strauss, if Mr. Wood will let me; we should certainly hear more of Strauss. Of one thing I am certain: that he is not an overwhelming genius. But he is interesting, he is worth the trouble of investigating; he has attempted serious work, and he demands serious attention, and, for the time, a suspended judgment.

The one play of the week has been "*The Princess's*

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"Nose" of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, at the Duke of York's Theatre. Mr. Jones is an ambitious man. He once observed, at the close of an article in the *Nineteenth Century* : "O human life ! so varied, so vast, so complex, so rich and subtle in tremulous deep organ tones, and soft proclaim of silver flutes, so utterly beyond our spell and insight, who of us can govern the thunder and whirlwind of thy ventages to any utterance of harmony, or pluck out the heart of thy eternal mystery ?" In other words, he has thought about life, and would like to give some representation of life in his plays. A distinguished dramatic critic, writing a complimentary preface, has said: "The claim of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's more ambitious plays to rank as literature may have been in some cases grudgingly allowed, but has not been seriously contested." In other words, some people have taken Mr. Jones as seriously as he takes himself. Does Mr. Jones, I wonder, really hear any "soft proclaim of silver flutes," or any of the other organ effects which he enumerates, in "The Princess's Nose"? Will any dramatic critic come forward to assert that "The Princess's Nose" has claims "to rank as literature"? Who knows? The audience, for once, was unanimous. Mr. Jones was not encouraged to appear. And yet there had been applause, prolonged applause, at many points throughout this bewildering evening. The applause was meant for the actors.

If Mr. Jones had shown as much tact in the construction of his play as in the selection of his cast, how admirable the play would have been ! I have rarely seen a play in which each actor seemed to fit into his part with such exactitude. Not only was Miss Irene Vanbrugh perfect as the

## Music, Staging, and Some Acting.

Princess, Miss Gertrude Kingston admirable as Mrs. Malpas, and Mr. H. B. Irving at his best as the Prince, but the secondary characters were made the most of by Mr. Pawle as Mr. Malpas, Mr. Cosmo Stuart, a finished study in farce, as Mr. Eglinton-Pyne, Miss Carlotta Addison as old Lady Eggerdon, and Miss Ethelwyn Arthur-Jones, who exaggerated in quite a promising way, as Daphne Langrish. But the play ! Well, the play began as a comedy, continued as a tragedy, and ended as a farce. It came to a crisis every five minutes, it suggested splendid situations, and then caricatured them unintentionally, it went shilly-shallying about among the emotions and sensations which may be drama or melodrama, whichever the handling makes them. The much-discussed name turns into a piece of vulgar irony : " You see there is a little poetical justice going about the world," says the Princess, when she hears that her rival, against whom she has fought in vain, has been upset by Providence in the form of a motor-car, and the bridge of her nose broken. Yes, the broken nose is Mr. Jones's symbol for poetical justice ; it indicates his intellectual attitude. There are many parts of the play where he shows, as he has so often shown, a genuine skill in presenting and manipulating humorous minor characters. As usual, they have little to do with the play, but they are amusing for their moment. It is the serious characters who will not be serious. They are meant well, the action hovers about them with little tempting solicitations, continually offering them an opportunity to be fine, to be genuine, and then withdrawing it before it can be grasped. The third act has all the material of tragedy, but the material is wasted ; only

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the actress makes anything of it. We know how Sullivan will take a motive of mere farce, such words as the "O Captain Shaw!" of "*Iolanthe*," and will write a lovely melody to go with it, fitting his music to the feeling which the words do but caricature. That is how Miss Irene Vanbrugh handled Mr. Jones's unshapen material. By the earnestness, sincerity, sheer nature, power, fire, dignity, and gaiety of her acting, she made for us a figure which Mr. Jones had not made. Mr. Jones would set his character in some impossible situation, and Miss Vanbrugh would make us, for the moment, forget its impossibility. He would give her a trivial or a grotesque or a vulgar action to do, and she would do it with distinction. She had force in lightness, a vivid malice, a magnetic cheerfulness; and she could suffer silently, and be sincere in a tragedy which had been conceived without sincerity. If acting could save a play, "*The Princess's Nose*" would have been saved. It was not saved.

## The Test of the Actor.

THE interest of bad plays lies in the test which they afford of the capability of actors. As we have just seen, in the case of Mr. Jones and his company, the actors cannot save a play which insists on defeating them at every turn. But, as we may realise any day when Sarah Bernhardt acts before us, there is a certain kind of frankly melodramatic play which can be lifted into at all events a region of excited and gratified nerves. I have lately been to see a melodrama, called "The Heel of Achilles," which Miss Julia Neilson has been giving at the Globe Theatre. The play is meant to tear at one's susceptibilities, much as "La Tosca" tears at them. "La Tosca" is not a fine play in itself, though it is a much better play than "The Heel of Achilles." But it is the vivid, sensational acting of Sarah Bernhardt which gives one all the shudders. "The Heel of Achilles" did not give me a single shudder, not because it was not packed with the raw material of sensation, but because Miss Julia Neilson went through so many trying experiences with nerves of marble.

I cannot help wondering at the curious lack of self-knowledge in actors. Here is a play, which depends for a great deal of its effect on a scene in which Lady Leslie, a young Englishwoman in Russia, promises to marry a Russian prince whom she hates, in order to save her betrothed lover from being sent to Siberia. The lover is shut in between two doors, unable to get out; he is the bearer of a State secret, and everything depends on his being able to catch the eleven P.M. train for Berlin. The Russian prince stands

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before the young Englishwoman, offering her the key of the door, the safety of her lover, and his own hand in marriage. Now, she has to express by her face and her movements all the feelings of astonishment, horror, suspense, love, hatred, distraction, which such a situation would call up in her. If she does not express them the scene goes for nothing. The actress stakes all on this scene.

Now, is it possible that Miss Julia Neilson really imagined herself to be capable of rendering this scene as it should be rendered? It is a scene that requires no brains, no subtle emotional quality, none of the more intellectual merits of acting. It requires simply a great passivity to feeling, the mere skill of letting horrors sweep over the face and the body like drenching waves. The actress need not know how she does it; she may do it without an effort, or she may obtain her spontaneity by an elaborate calculation. But to do it at all she must be the actress in every fibre of her body; she must be able to vibrate freely. If the emotion does not seize her in its own grasp, and then seize us through her, it will all go for nothing. Well, Miss Neilson sat, and walked, and started, and became rigid, and glanced at the clock, and knelt, and fell against the wall, and cast her eyes about, and threw her arms out, and made her voice husky; and it all went for nothing. Never for an instant did she suggest what she was trying to suggest, and after the first moment of disappointment the mind was left calmly free to watch her attempt as if it were speculating round a problem.

How many English actresses, I wonder, would have been capable of dealing adequately with such a scene as that? I

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take it, not because it is a good scene, but because it affords so rudimentary a test of the capacity for acting. The test of the capacity for acting begins where words end ; it is independent of words ; you may take poor words as well as fine words ; it is all the same. The embodying power, the power to throw open one's whole nature to an overcoming sensation, the power to render this sensation in so inevitable a way that others shall feel it : that is the one thing needful. It is not art, it is not even the beginning of art ; but it is the foundation on which alone art can be built.

The other day, in "Ulysses," there was only one piece of acting that was quite convincing : the acting of Mr. Brough as the Swineherd. It is a small part and an easy part, but it was perfectly done. Almost any other part would have been more striking and surprising if it had been done as perfectly, but no other part was done as perfectly. Mr. Brough has developed a stage-personality of his own, with only a limited range of emotion, but he has developed it until it has become a second nature with him. He has only to speak, and he may say what he likes ; we accept him after the first word, and he remains what that first word has shown him to be. Mr. Tree, with his many gifts, his effective talents, all his taste, ambition, versatility, never produces just that effect : he remains interestingly aside from what he is doing ; you see his brain working upon it, you enjoy his by-play ; his gait, his studied gestures, absorb you ; "How well this is done !" you say, and " How well that is done !" and, indeed, you get a complete picture out of his representation of the part : a picture, not a man.

## The Test of the Actor.

I am not sure that melodrama is not the hardest test of the actor : it is, at least, the surest. All the human emotions throng noisily together in the making of melodrama : they are left there, in their naked muddle, and they come to no good end ; but there they are. To represent any primary emotion, and to be ineffective, is to fail in the fundamental thing. All actors should be sent to school in melodrama, as all dramatic authors should learn their trade there.

## Tolstoi and the Others.

THERE is little material for the stage in the novels of Tolstoi. Those novels are full, it is true, of drama; but they cannot be condensed into dramas. The method of Tolstoi is slow, deliberate, significantly unemphatic; he works by adding detail to detail, as a certain kind of painter adds touch to touch. The result is, in a sense, monotonous, and it is meant to be monotonous. Tolstoi endeavours to give us something more nearly resembling daily life than any one has yet given us; and in daily life the moment of spiritual crisis is rarely the moment in which external action takes place. In the drama we can only properly realise the soul's action through some corresponding or consequent action which takes place visibly before us. You will find, throughout Tolstoi's work, many striking single scenes, but never, I think, a scene which can bear detachment from that network of detail which has led up to it and which is to come out of it. Often the scene which most profoundly impresses one is a scene trifling in itself, and owing its impressiveness partly to that very quality. Take, for instance, in "Resurrection," Book II. ch. xxviii., the scene in the theatre "during the second act of the eternal 'Dame aux Camélias,' in which a foreign actress once again, and in a novel manner, showed how women died of consumption." The General's wife, Mariette, smiles at Nekhludoff in the box, and, outside, in the street, another woman, the other "half-world," smiles at him, just in the same way. That is all, but to Nekhludoff it is one of the great crises of his life. He has seen something,

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for the first time, in what he now feels to be its true light, and he sees it "as clearly as he saw the palace, the sentinels, the fortress, the river, the boats and the Stock Exchange. And just as on this northern summer night there was no restful darkness on the earth, but only a dismal, dull light coming from an invisible source, so in Nekhludoff's soul there was no longer the restful darkness, ignorance." The chapter is profoundly impressive; it is one of those chapters which no one but Tolstoi has ever written. Imagine it transposed to the stage, if that were possible, and the inevitable disappearance of everything that gives it meaning!

In Tolstoi the story never exists for its own sake, but for the sake of a very definite moral idea. Even in his later novels Tolstoi is not a preacher; he gives us an interpretation of life, not a theorising about life. But, to him, the moral idea is almost everything, and (what is of more consequence) it gives a great part of its value to his "realism" of prisons and brothels and police courts. In all forms of art, the point of view is of more importance than the subject-matter. It is as essential for the novelist to get the right focus as it is for the painter. In a page of Zola and in a page of Tolstoi you might find the same gutter described with the same minuteness; and yet in reading the one you might see only the filth, while in reading the other you might feel only some fine human impulse. Tolstoi "sees life steadily" because he sees it under a divine light; he has a saintly patience with evil, and so becomes a casuist through sympathy, a psychologist out of that pity which is understanding. And then, it is as a direct consequence of this point of view, in the mere process of unravelling

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things, that his greatest skill is shown as a novelist. He does not exactly write well ; he is satisfied if his words express their meaning, and no more ; his words have neither beauty nor subtlety in themselves. But, if you will only give him time, for he needs time, he will creep closer and closer up to some doubtful and remote truth, not knowing itself for what it is : he will reveal the soul to itself, like "God's spy."

If you want to know how daily life goes on among people who know as little about themselves as you know about your neighbours in a street or drawing-room, read Jane Austen, and, on that level, you will be perfectly satisfied. But if you want to know why these people are happy or unhappy, why the thing which they do deliberately is not the thing which they either want or ought to do, read Tolstoi ; and I can hardly add that you will be satisfied. I never read Tolstoi without a certain suspense, sometimes a certain terror. An accusing spirit seems to peer between every line ; I can never tell what new disease of the soul those pitying and unswerving eyes may not have discovered.

Such, then, is a novel of Tolstoi ; such, more than almost any of his novels, is "Resurrection," the masterpiece of his old age, into which he has put an art but little less consummate than that of "Anna Karenina," together with the finer spirit of his later gospel. Out of this novel a play in French was put together by M. Henry Bataille and produced at the Odéon on November 14 of last year. A play in English, said to be by MM. Henry Bataille and Michael Morton, has been produced this week by Mr. Tree

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at Her Majesty's Theatre ; and the play is called, as the French play was called, Tolstoi's "Resurrection." I do not know if Mr. Morton has translated M. Bataille, or merely adapted him. I have read in a capable French paper that "l'on est heureux d'avoir pu applaudir une œuvre vraiment noble, vraiment pure," in the play of M. Bataille. Are those quite the words one would use about the play in English ?

They are not quite the words I would use about the play in English. It is a melodrama with one good scene, the scene in the prison ; and this is good only to a certain point. There is another scene which is amusing, the scene of the jury, but the humour is little more than clowning, and the tragic note, which should strike through it, is only there in a parody of itself. Indeed the word parody is the only word which can be used about the greater part of the play, and it seems to me a pity that the name of Tolstoi should be brought into such dangerous companionship with the vulgarities and sentimentalities of the London stage. I heard people around me confessing that they had not read the book. How terrible must have been the disillusion of those people, if they had ever expected anything of Tolstoi, and if they really believed that this demagogue Prince, who stands in nice poses in the middle of drawing-rooms and of prison cells, talking nonsense with a convincing disbelief, was in any sense a mouthpiece for Tolstoi's poor simple little gospel. Tolstoi according to Captain Marshall, I should be inclined to define him ; but I must give Mr. Tree his full credit in the matter. When he crucifies himself, so to speak, symbolically, across the door of the jury-

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room, remarking in his slowest manner : “ The bird flutters no longer ; I must atone, I must atone ! ” one is, in every sense, alone with the actor. Mr. Tree has many arts, but he has not the art of sincerity. His conception of acting is, literally, to act, on every occasion. Even in the prison scene, in which Miss Ashwell is so good, until she begins to shout and he to rant, “ and then the care is over,” Mr. Tree cannot be his part without acting it.

That prison-scene is, on the whole, well done, and the first part of it, when the women shout and drink and quarrel, is acted with a satisfying sense of vulgarity which contrasts singularly with what is meant to be a suggestion of the manners of society in St. Petersburg in the scene preceding. Perhaps the most lamentable thing in the play is the first act. This act takes the place of those astounding chapters in the novel in which the seduction of Katusha is described with a truth, tact, frankness, and subtlety, unparalleled in any novel I have ever read. I read them over before I went to the theatre, and when I got to the theatre I found a scene before me which was not Tolstoi’s scene, a foolish, sentimental conversation in which I recognised hardly more than one sentence of Tolstoi (and this brought in in the wrong place), and, in short, the old make-believe of all the hack-writers for the stage, dished up again, and put before us, with a simplicity of audacity at which one can only marvel (“ a thing imagination boggles at ”) as an “ adaptation ” from Tolstoi. Tolstoi has been hardly treated by some translators and by many critics ; in his own country, if you mention his name, you are as likely as not to be met by a shrug and an “ Ah, monsieur, il divague un peu ! ” In

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his own country he has the censor always against him ; some of his books he has never been able to print in full in Russian. But in the new play at His Majesty's Theatre we have, in what is boldly called Tolstoi's "Resurrection," something which is not Tolstoi at all. There is M. Bataille, who might take the responsibility of it, or there is Mr. Morton, who may have done more than merely translate M. Bataille, or there is Mr. Tree, who may have exercised the supervision of an actor-manager ; but Tolstoi, might not the great name of Tolstoi be left well alone ?

## Literary Drama.

ON the first night of Mr. Anthony Hope's new comedy at the Garrick Theatre, a critic, who is himself a man of letters, surprised me by saying that, though the play was not dramatic, it was still literary. He meant it to be, in its way, a compliment, though he discriminated by saying, as a higher compliment, that Ibsen was not literary. I have never been able to see that any written work can be, in a true sense, literature, if it does not precisely answer the purpose of its existence. Now, a play is written to be acted, and it will not be literature merely because its sentences are nicely written. It will be literature, dramatic literature, if, in addition to being nicely written, it has the qualities which make a stage-play a good stage-play. Ibsen's plays are in the best sense of the word literary, because they express their ideas through a perfectly successful use of the conditions of the stage, because they deal profoundly with life through the medium which they have chosen for expression.

I allow to Mr. Anthony Hope's comedy all kinds of negative merits, and a few slight merits of a positive kind. It is not, sentence by sentence, badly written; the sentences are neatly turned, with a neatness which Mr. Pinero, for instance, has never acquired. It is not without ideas; and the ideas, so far as they go, have a certain acuteness. It is entirely without vulgarity, or any kind of bad form. In the last act it moves swiftly, becomes really amusing, suggests an ironical outlook on things. But think for an instant of a play like "The Importance of Being Earnest," which has

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been revived with such an instant and inevitable success at the St. James's. Oscar Wilde was a philosopher in masquerade, and he had perfected one art: the art of the stage. It is not because every sentence is amusing in itself that people go to see his comedies; it is because the "fundamental brain-work" of his comedies is adequate; it is because they do exactly what they aim at doing. There is the genuine literary faculty, making drama: how different a thing from the amusing and correctly-expressed by-play of such stage trifles as "*Pilkerton's Peerage*," which we are all so ready to call literary merely because they are not illiterate!

But it is, after all, in the other play of the week that the question of literary drama presents itself most significantly. Mr. Tree's production of Mr. Stephen Phillips's "*Ulysses*," at His Majesty's Theatre, is full of interest for all to whom the poetic drama is of interest. The play was sumptuously staged, capably acted, the verse was spoken with care, and, if it was drawled a little beyond measure, that is a fault far more pardonable than the customary prose gabble. Mr. Phillips, as we know, is a writer of careful and often felicitous verse; he has a temperate charm, a graceful sense of epithet, a genuine poetic feeling; and he has a firm hold on his material: he can make his poetry hold the stage. Here, it might seem, is the true literary drama, drama and literature at once. There is an action that moves; there are plausible characters, who speak in clear and elegant verse. What more do we want?

We want something more, and, if we are to have great poetic drama, we must have this something more. Poetry

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is one thing, stagecraft is another; and there are different kinds of poetry as there are different kinds of stagecraft. The action of "Ulysses" is theatrical, the language is idyllic. The two tendencies struggle throughout the play, the action breaking away from the words wherever the words are fine, and the words stopping the action to give utterance to a recitation. Here and there a fine line corresponds with a fine dramatic moment, as when Telemachus, urged by Athene to rise up against the Suitors, his enemies, and answering: "Goddess, I am but one, and they are many," is answered by Athene: "Thou art innumerable as thy wrongs." But take the end of the second act, the escape from Hades, and see how that opportunity for fine dramatic poetry is wasted in theatrical shrieks: "I come—I come—I stagger up to thee," and the like; in descriptive asides: "O whirling dead! And a great swirl of souls," and the like; and in mere squabbles with ghosts, who "circle over Ulysses with cries, obscuring him." Again, the one great emotional opportunity in the play, the one great opportunity for passion, the scene on the island of Ogygia between Ulysses and Calypso, has many touches of meditative prettiness, but not a single note of passion. Throughout, every character speaks as he is told, and he speaks as Mr. Phillips speaks, in narrative or idyllic verse. The poetry might be detached from the dramatic framework and the framework would stand exactly as it did before. Now, true dramatic poetry is an integral part of the dramatic framework, which, indeed, at its best, it makes. "Ulysses" is a spectacle-drama, with a commentary in verse. At its best it reaches only what Coleridge, contrasting Schiller with Shakespeare,

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called "the material sublime." It has not flowered up out of a seed of hidden beauty; such beauty as it has, and it has beauty, is wrought from without, and presents itself to us as decoration.

Mr. Phillips is at his best when dealing with Greek subjects; he loves clear outline, simplicity of action. But his *Ulysses* is not a Greek of the heroic age; he is, as Dr. Todhunter, speaking of Mr. Phillips, acutely says in the *Fortnightly Review*, "classical in the decorative sense in which Lord Leighton's work was classical." He goes through many adventures successfully, commenting on them by the way. Athene praises him for his craft, but he is without that wisdom which, in the Greek conception of prudence, went hand in hand with craft. Contrast him, I will not say with Homer, but with the lofty poetry of Mr. Bridges, the grave and strenuous poetry of Tennyson. He is a well-constructed figure of a man; but prick him, and the sawdust would run out.

The poetic drama, if it is to become a genuine thing, must be conceived as drama, and must hold us, as a play of Ibsen's holds us, by the sheer interest of its representation of life. It must live, and it must live in poetry, as in its natural atmosphere. The verse must speak as straight as prose, but with a more beautiful voice. It must avoid rhetoric as scrupulously as Ibsen avoids rhetoric. It must not "make poetry," however good in its way. Here, for instance, is one of the most effective speeches in "*Ulysses*," for effective it certainly was, just as the Italian aria was effective in the opera which it interrupted :

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Then have the truth ; I speak as a man speaks ;  
Pour out my heart like treasure at your feet.  
This odorous amorous isle of violets,  
That leans all leaves into the glassy deep,  
With brooding music over noontide moss,  
And low dirge of the lily-swinging bee,—  
Then stars like opening eyes on closing flowers,—  
Palls on my heart. Ah God ! that I might see  
Gaunt Ithaca stand up out of the surge,  
Yon lashed and streaming rocks, and sobbing crags,  
The screaming gull and the wild-flying cloud :—  
To see far off the smoke of my own hearth,  
To smell far out the glebe of my own farms,  
To spring alive upon her precipices,  
And hurl the singing spear into the air ;  
To scoop the mountain torrent in my hand,  
And plunge into the midnight of her pines ;  
To look into the eyes of her who bore me,  
And clasp his knees who 'gat me in his joy,  
Prove if my son be like my dream of him.

Some of that is good descriptive verse, but it is all declamation, none of it is speech. Now, between declamation and dramatic poetry there is a great gulf. The actor loves declamation, because it gives him an opportunity to recite, and every actor loves to recite poetry. It provides him with a pulpit. He does not like to realise, any more than his author likes to realise, that every line of poetry which is not speech is bad dramatic poetry.

## Mr. Stephen Phillips and a Lecture.

IN the afternoon I went to the Coronet Theatre to hear M. Gustave Larroumet lecture on the modern French drama. M. Larroumet is that curious type, unknown over here, the professor as dramatic critic. He lectures at the Sorbonne, he is a member of the Institut, he is Perpetual Secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and he is also the dramatic critic of *Le Temps*, where he has taken the place left vacant by the death of Francisque Sarcey. He has written a book on Racine, and another book on Mariavaux; he has published volumes of literary and dramatic criticism, and criticism of painting and sculpture. He knows the literatures of many countries; he has travelled, observed, and, as we have seen, lectured. And he has opinions. He believes, for instance, that there are certain wicked abstractions, Wagnerism, Tolstoi-ism, Ibsenism, which must be vigorously opposed, as well as certain artists, Wagner, Tolstoi, Ibsen, who have, at all events, some technical merits as well as serious errors of substance. He believes that Nordau has explained, on his theory of degeneration, "the vogue of M. Verlaine," and why "M. Maeterlinck was famous among us for several months." He believes that Richepin and Rostand have revived French poetry; he believes that Tennyson was a symbolist; he believes many other things. In his lecture he chose discreetly from among his beliefs, and in many parts of it was admirably sane and sober, and discriminated carefully between the qualities of Scribe, Augier, and Dumas fils, and between the qualities of M. Brieux and M. Hervieu. He

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began by dismissing Romanticism as an accident, a deviation, a "mere French Revolution." Hugo and the others were condemned by their poetic vision to see life unsteadily, and to see it in parts. However, "M. Scribe," as, with some excess of politeness, they were accustomed to call him, set all that to rights by inventing *l'intrigue*. Scribe, "*un homme de génie, incontestablement*," began the modern drama; Augier, Dumas fils, and Sardou added realism of detail to his method of bewildering theatrical dexterity, and all went well until the arrival of another "accident," the accident of 1870-71. A new direction began to be seen; in the novel the school of Naturalists had invented a new form of art, but Flaubert, Zola, and Daudet (whom M. Larroumet prefers for his "charm"), failed in their attempt to transport the Naturalistic novel, just as it was, to the stage. It was Henri Becque who, almost accidentally, invented the new form for Naturalism at the theatre. "*Les Corbeaux*" and "*La Parisienne*" were taken straight out of his own life, his own experience; he painted life grey because he saw it grey; he was pitiless towards humanity because he had found no pity in men and women; he subordinated plot to the exact rendering of fact because he had not come out of any theatrical training-school. Just then Antoine founded the Théâtre-Libre, the young men of the cabarets of Montmartre added a little bitter gaiety to this sad and sordid realism, and the new formula was at work. First came Jules Lemaître, with "*Revoltée*"; then Georges de Porto-Riche, with "*Amoureuse*"; then Henri Lavedan, with his dialogues in "*La Vie Parisienne*," and his brilliant theatrical success; then Brieux, with "*Blanchette*" (which

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was to be followed by "La Robe Rouge"); then Hervieu, with "Les Paroles Restent," "Les Tenailles," "La Course du Flambeau" (which seems to M. Larroumet "one of the finest things in all dramatic literature"), and "L'Enigme," which we were seeing the other week; finally, Capus, the one optimist, with "La Veine" and "Les Deux Ecoles." At the end M. Larroumet talked a little about "Cyrano de Bergerac," which his audience seemed to recognise with a start of delight, and *l'oiseau bleu* and *l'idéal* were mentioned. Then, with a hope for the return of more cheerfulness and more plot, the lecture came to an end. It had been interesting; it gave one some solid information, and suggested the limitations of the professor as dramatic critic. The afternoon had been profitably spent.

In the evening, after the briefest interval, I found myself at the St. James's Theatre, where Mr. Stephen Phillips' first play, "Paolo and Francesca," was at last, after its long delay, to be given. Let me say at once that it was given admirably, that it was given as a poetic play should be given. Mr. Alexander has perhaps never attempted a more ambitious piece of acting; I cannot think of any significant moment in which he did not seem to me to be doing exactly what the author meant him to do. If his part was rather a series of detached moods than the realisation of a single character, that was Mr. Phillips' fault, not Mr. Alexander's. And Miss Robins as Lucrezia acted with no less care and intelligence; she did all she could to transform a melodramatic part into a tragic part. Miss Evelyn Millard as Francesca looked and moved and spoke beautifully: she made pictures whenever she crossed the stage. Mr. Ainley

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as Paolo had the necessary good looks, and, though a little stiff and a little sulky at times, embodied the character as we find it in the book not altogether inadequately. He was rhetorical, but so is the part; he fell into attitudes, but so does the part; he spoke to the audience rather than to Francesca, but so the part insists on his speaking. For, there is no doubt, in all this beautiful talking and moving, in these picturesque scenes which look so well on the stage, there is no real life, no real dramatic life, but always, in the fatal sense, "literature." The fundamental human probabilities are not observed; the whole structure, with its elegance and charm, is built on an unsound basis. I very rarely happen to see a newspaper, but I did happen to see the *Morning Post* on the day after this performance, and I was struck by the sagacity of the long notice which I found there. It was an analysis of the human probabilities of the piece, and it showed clearly and without prejudice, allowing for merit wherever merit was to be found, that the piece was constructed entirely with a view to effectiveness, superficial effectiveness, on the stage, and not according to the variable but quite capturable logic of human nature. I found myself in agreement with almost every word of the notice, and I thought how wise it was to take the play just on those grounds, to examine it where its real strength or weakness was bound to reveal itself. Take any separate scene, and you will find that it has its merits; no, not quite any scene, but many of the scenes. Then examine that scene as a natural or probable occurrence, as a scene made by the characters who appear in it, and not made to show them off on a certain chosen side. Take, for instance, the

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scene in the druggseller's shop. That was very picturesque and effective, and it did the stage business which needed to be done. But, taken as human truth and not as stage mechanism, every word was a betrayal rather than a revelation of character, every action was the exact contrary of the action natural under the circumstances.

It would be interesting to compare in detail Mr. Phillips' "Paolo and Francesca" and d'Annunzio's "Francesca da Rimini," but I will only take one scene, which is typical of each writer: the scene of the reading, the scene which Dante has made difficult and inevitable for every dramatist who deals with the subject. In "Paolo and Francesca" it takes place in a garden; the book is held on the lovers' knees; it is passed to and fro without the slightest reason except the author's wish to give some lines to each; the lines they read are modern and sentimental; the book has to be laid down awkwardly in order that the kiss may be elegant; and Francesca, as she "droops towards" Paolo, cries, as he kisses her: "Ah! Launcelot!" Now, in d'Annunzio, the scene takes place in a room; there is a reading-desk beside a window-seat; the alternation of the readers is arranged with a probability which makes its own effectiveness; the lines they read are taken word for word from the original French prose romance of "Lancelot du Lac"; and when Paolo kisses Francesca her cry is not, like the English Francesca's, a literary reminiscence, but the cry which would instinctively and inevitably come to every woman's lips at such a moment: "No, Paolo!" The reason is that d'Annunzio, whose play has many faults, but this conspicuous merit, has conceived his play as a thing

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that once really happened, and that must happen over again on the stage with the same energy of life ; while Mr. Phillips has conceived his play, gracious, decorative, full of poetical feeling though it is, as a literary thing, and as a thing to be acted ; not as life, not as drama.

## Some Plays and the Public.

THERE was only one new play last week, "Memory's Garden," by Mr. Albert Chevalier and Mr. Tom Gallon, at the Comedy, but there were two revivals, "Little Lord Fauntleroy" at the Avenue, and "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" at the Globe. Of these, "Little Lord Fauntleroy" was certainly the best play, and "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" certainly the worst. "Memory's Garden" fell between quite a number of stools, but it aroused a certain sympathy as it tottered. I wish Mr. Chevalier had relied entirely on himself for his work, and not called in a theatrical joiner to fit his scenes together. I remember that in some of those coster songs which he used to sing there was sometimes a touch of the romantic and sentimental, but also much genuine human feeling. He did not write all his songs, but he wrote the best of them, and sometimes the music of them, and when he sang them the maker and the executant became one. There, I always felt, was a genuine artist. He had not the range, the poignancy, or the subtlety of Yvette Guilbert, but in many ways he was better than Paulus (who had, of course, a sprightly finish of his own), better than Mr. Arthur Roberts (who could carry things before him with a more swift and irresistible comic dash), better than Mr. Dan Leno (who at his best has an inimitable plausibility of manner). He gave the music-hall stage something it had never had in England, something which it has lost since he retired to the chamber-concert atmosphere of the Queen's Hall. I have not seen him since he has been at the Queen's Hall, but I have been

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told that he has extended his ground without losing any of the ground that he had already made his own. Only the other day he published an autobiography. Now he comes before us with a play.

There was a queer sentence in it somewhere, rather to this effect : "Memory is a garden, and the flowers in it are immortal." Well, in the play we get the weeds along with the flowers. It was an old story, with a few new details, and there were tedious and trivial things in it. But the later part of the second act, the scene between the seduced woman and the father of her seducer, and then the scene between father and son, had a certain grip on reality; true words were said in the midst of some merely conventional words. The acting of this scene, though very emphatic, was undoubtedly powerful. Mr. Mackintosh and Miss Norah Lancaster were both sincere, they carried our sympathies over the difficult moments. For there were difficult moments. These moved and troubled people did not speak always the spontaneous language of their emotion. They were sometimes aware that an audience was listening. But they spoke like human beings, and not like the murderous puppets of "The Heel of Achilles." And elsewhere in the play, where it was much weaker, there were incidental passages that suggested real people, such as the humorous scene which enlivened the dragging third act, the episode of the old blind man and his dog.

The humanity which we find in "Little Lord Fauntleroy" is a more consistent kind of humanity, and, acted as it is, excellently, by Miss Marion Terry and Master Vyvian Thomas, I have been able to see it twice, with pleasure,

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within the limit of a few months, because it has real feeling in it, and words that say what they mean. Mrs. Hodgson Burnett is a writer of genuine talent, and she has put her best work into this play. It is the only play about children that I know which does not sicken me, with the exception of Jules Renard's "Carrots." "Carrots," of course, is finer ; it has more atmosphere, it is more purely a piece of literature. "Little Lord Fauntleroy" is not quite literature, in the fine sense ; it has not the terrible directness of naked truth. It is truth in velvet knickerbockers. But, up to a certain point, how good it is, how full of tenderly humorous observation ! And Miss Marion Terry, an actress of much greater capacity than the famous sister who has played so enchantingly at acting, takes up Mrs. Burnett's work where she left it, and completes it. Then, what a pleasure it is to see a boy played by a boy ! This particular boy seems to me astonishingly clever, already a finished artist, doing everything naturally, and knowing why he does it.

At "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" I happened to be in the last row of the stalls. My seat was not altogether well adapted for seeing and hearing the play, but it was admirably adapted for observing the pit, and I gave some of my attention to my neighbours there. Whenever a foolish joke was made on the stage, when Miss Julia Neilson, as Nell, the orange girl, stuttered with laughter or romped heavily across the stage, the pit thrilled and quivered with delight. At every piece of clowning there was the same responsive gurgle of delight. Tricks of acting so badly done that I should have thought a child would have seen through them,

## Some Plays and the Public.

and resented them as an imposition, were accepted in perfect good faith, and gloated over. I was turning over the matter in my mind afterwards, when I remembered something that was said to me the other day by a young Swedish poet who is now in London. He told me that he had been to most of the theatres, and he had been surprised to find that the greater part of the pieces which were played at the principal London theatres were such pieces as would be played in Norway and Sweden at the lower class theatres, and that nobody here seemed to mind. The English audience, he said, reminded him of a lot of children ; they took what was set before them with ingenuous good temper, they laughed when they were expected to laugh, cried when they were expected to cry. But of criticism, preference, selection, not a trace. He was amazed, for he had been told that London was a centre of civilisation. Well, in future I shall try to remember, when I hear an audience clapping its hands wildly over some bad play, badly acted : it is all right, it is only the children.

## “ Ben Hur ” on the Stage.

THE novel of “ Ben Hur,” notwithstanding its enormous popularity, has merit. It distinguishes itself from other books of the kind by a certain homely simplicity, and by the distinctness with which the writer sees what he is writing about. It is called “ a tale of the Christ,” and it begins with the meeting of the three Wise Men in the desert, on their way to Bethlehem, and ends with the Crucifixion. General Wallace has been wise in making the main part of his story independent of the story of the life of Christ. Christ is seen, in passing, two or three times ; but, until the end, that is all. The only words which he speaks are the words recorded in the Gospels. He heals two lepers, who are the lost mother and sister of Ben Hur. Ben Hur watches him die, and afterwards builds the catacomb of San Calixto in Rome, as a refuge for the Christians. “ Out of that vast tomb,” says the author in his last sentence, “ Christianity issued to supersede the Cæsars.”

Strictly speaking, the book is not written at all. The language is awkward, uncomfortable, like the language of a man who is taking up his pen for the first time. We come constantly upon such phrases as : “ The goodness of the reader is again besought in favour of an explanation ” ; or, “ With this plain generalisation in mind, all further desirable knowledge upon the subject can be had by following the incidents of the scene occurring.” A Bacchante in the grove of Daphne, trying to talk poetically, talks after this fashion : “ The winds which blow here are respirations of the gods. Let us give ourselves to waftage of the winds.”

## “ Ben Hur ” on the Stage.

But this childishness of style cannot conceal the thought, knowledge, and sympathy which General Wallace has put into his book. The description of the desert, at the beginning, clumsily though it is written, is sensitively felt ; these halting sentences do, after all, what they are meant to do ; they give us the sensation of the desert, the camel, and the travellers. The description of the Arab horses, in the fourth book, is that of a man who knows and loves horses ; the fight at sea between the galleys, the whole episode of the galley-slaves, is vividly realised in every detail ; the life of the desert and of the cities, the different lives of the nations swarming together without mingling, are indicated with not too obvious a purpose. The story itself is a series of adventures, chosen for their effectiveness, and certainly effective. Without being literature, it is something more than a sensation novel of the first century.

Now turn to the play, as it is to be seen at Drury Lane. The atmosphere, suggested in the book, is painted crudely upon moving canvases ; there is the real camel, indeed a delightful beast, who went through his part meekly, but with ironical grimaces ; there is a cunning floor which runs one way under the horses' feet while the horses run the other way, and you see the chariot race in the arena ; there is a search-light from the level of the upper boxes, to represent the glory of the face of Christ, cleansing lepers. The lepers themselves are before you, quite neat and clean, their faces chalked a little, but, luckily, not at all as General Wallace describes them in the novel. The distressing “ thee ” and “ thou ” of the novel remain, and much of the distressing dialogue. But the adventures, which

## “Ben Hur” on the Stage.

seemed a little detached even there, present themselves now without any obvious link of connection ; the characters, somewhat vague and somewhat generalised though they were, have turned rigid and stamped themselves in some few crude gestures. Beauty, as well as strangeness, is suggested in the novel ; there is little beauty, and only at times a really interesting strangeness, in what Drury Lane has to show us. The fact is, romance of this remote kind cannot be finely brought before us in the crude way of our modern spectacular theatres. The flash-light rationalises Christ into a synonym for the latest electric cure of leprosy. I thought it grotesque, from the point of view of artistic or of religious reverence. Now the draped and painted figure, like a Russian ikon, which stood for God the Father in the Elizabethan Stage Society’s representation of “Everyman,” seemed to me quite reverently conceived and rendered. If we are to deal with great subjects we must deal with them straightforwardly. Let us bring any deific or angelic being on the stage if we will do it simply, as the peasants do at Ober-Ammergau. I once saw Sarah Bernhardt hissed off the stage in Paris for taking the part of the Virgin Mary in a dramatic poem of Edmond Haraucourt, a poet of at least serious intentions. It was not that the verses of “La Passion” had any irreverence in them, it was merely that Sarah Bernhardt was a Jewess, and there is a feeling in France against the Virgin Mary being associated with persons of her own race. In the novel Ben Hur watches the Crucifixion ; the adaptor stayed his hand in time, and we are left with an Edwin Long picture of women and children, holding olive branches in their hands, and singing, “Hosanna !

## “ Ben Hur ” on the Stage.

Hosanna ! Hosanna in the highest ! ” as they come down from Mount Olivet.

In the scene which preceded this one, the scene of the miracle, there was some attempt to produce one of those effects which only Mr. Gordon Craig seems able to produce satisfactorily. The stage was in darkness, gradually a little light stole in, and a tossing crowd was seen dimly, waving its hands in the air. So far so good, but the light, I suppose to suggest miraculous methods, which it did not suggest, increased rapidly, and the effect was gone almost before we had time to realise it. The crowd, when seen, was an ordinary stage-crowd, and, though all the faces should have been turned in the direction from which Christ was supposed to be approaching, half of them were turned in the opposite direction. The reason was that a chorus was being sung, and the chorus ladies and gentlemen had evidently been told to keep their eyes fixed on the electrically lighted bâton of the conductor. They did, but the stage-picture was spoilt, and there was nothing in the music to make amends for it.

## “ Faust ” at the Lyceum.

SIR HENRY IRVING has revived the version of Goethe's “Faust” which W. G. Wills made for him some twenty years ago, and is now playing it at the Lyceum, with Miss Cecilia Loftus instead of Miss Ellen Terry as Margaret. The piece has no longer novelty, the technique of its stage managing is no longer surprising ; Miss Loftus is good, but not startlingly good ; Sir Henry is much the same as he has always been, and one is inclined to wonder whether the piece, taken more or less on its own merits, is likely to repeat its old, almost unparalleled successes.

Wills' adaptation begins with the third scene of “Faust,” the scene of the study, the poodle, Mephistopheles, and the student. The scene of the Witches' Kitchen comes next, and the scene in Auerbach's cellar is transferred, in a somewhat mutilated shape, to the Lorenz-Platz at Nuremberg. The two street scenes between Faust and Mephistopheles are condensed into one, which takes place on the city wall, against a curtain giving a red-roofed view of Nuremberg. The spinning-wheel is transferred from Margaret's room to Martha's garden. Otherwise the adaptation follows the original scene by scene. Unfortunately Wills was not as well satisfied with Goethe's verse as with his construction, though it happens that the verse is distinctly better than the construction. He kept the shell and threw away the kernel. Faust becomes insignificant in this play to which he gives his name. In Goethe he was a thinker, even more than a poet. Here he speaks bad verse full of emptiness. Even where Goethe's words are followed, in a literal translation, the

## “Faust” at the Lyceum.

meaning seems to have gone out of them; they are displaced, they no longer count for anything. The Walpurgis Night is stripped of all its poetry, and Faust's study is emptied of all its wisdom. The Witches' Kitchen brews messes without magic, lest the gallery should be bewildered. The part of Martha is extended, in order to get in some more than indifferent “comic relief.” Mephistopheles throws away a good part of his cunning wit, in order that he may shock no prejudices by seeming to be cynical with seriousness, and in order that his red livery may have its full spectral effect. Margaret is to be seen full length; the little German soubrette does her best to be the Helen Faust takes her for; and we are meant to be profoundly interested in the love-story. “Most of all,” the programme assures us, Wills “strove to tell the love-story in a manner that might appeal to an English-speaking audience.”

Now if you take the philosophy and the poetry out of Goethe's “Faust,” and leave the rest, it does not seem to me that you leave the part which is best worth having. In writing the First Part of “Faust” Goethe made free use of the legend of Dr. Faustus, not always improving that legend where he departed from it. If we turn to Marlowe's “Dr. Faustus” we shall see, embedded among chaotic fragments of mere rubbish and refuse, the outlines of a far finer, a far more poetic, conception of the legend. Marlowe's imagination was more essentially a poetic imagination than Goethe's, and he was capable, at moments, of more satisfying dramatic effects. When his Faustus says to Mephistopheles :

## “ Faust ” at the Lyceum.

One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,  
To glut the longing of my heart’s desire :  
That I may have unto my paramour  
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late ;

and when, his prayer being granted, he cries :

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,  
And burned the topless towers of Ilium ?

he is a much more splendid and significant person than the Faust of Goethe, who needs the help of the devil and of an old woman to seduce a young girl who has fallen in love with him at first sight. Goethe, it is true, made what amends he could afterwards, in the Second Part, when much of the impulse had gone and all the deliberation in the world was not active enough to replace it. Helen has her share, among other abstractions, but the breath has not returned into her body, she is glacial, a talking enigma, to whom Marlowe’s Faustus would never have said with the old emphasis :

And none but thou shalt be my paramour !

What remains, then, in Wills’ version, is the Gretchen story, in all its detail, a spectacular representation of the not wholly sincere witchcraft, and the impressive outer shell of Mephistopheles, with, in Sir Henry Irving’s pungent and acute rendering, something of the real savour of the denying spirit. Mephistopheles is the modern devil, the devil of culture and polite negation ; the comrade, in part the master, of Heine, and perhaps the grandson and pupil of Voltaire.

## “ Faust ” at the Lyceum.

On the Lyceum stage he is the one person of distinction, the one intelligence ; though so many of his best words have been taken from him, it is with a fine subtlety that he says the words that remain. And the figure, with its lightness, weary grace, alert and uneasy step, solemnity, grim laughter, remains with one, after one has come away and forgotten whether he told us all that Goethe confided to him.





Mes mains dans les vôtres

G. Léonard

## Yvette Guilbert.

### I.

SHE is tall, thin, a little angular, most winningly and girlishly awkward, as she wanders on to the stage with an air of vague distraction. Her shoulders droop, her arms hang limply. She doubles forward in an automatic bow in response to the thunders of applause, and that curious smile breaks out along her lips and rises and dances in her bright light-blue eyes, wide open in a sort of child-like astonishment. Her hair, a bright auburn, rises in soft masses above a large pure forehead. She wears a trailing dress, stripped yellow and pink, without ornament. Her arms are covered with long black gloves. The applause stops suddenly; there is a hush of suspense; she is beginning to sing.

And with the first note you realise the difference between Yvette Guilbert and all the rest of the world. A sonnet by Mr. André Raffalovich states just that difference so subtly that I must quote it to help out my interpretation :

If you want hearty laughter, country mirth—  
Or frantic gestures of an acrobat,  
Heels over head—or floating lace skirts worth  
I know not what, a large eccentric hat  
And diamonds, the gift of some dull boy—  
Then when you see her do not wrong Yvette,  
Because Yvette is not a clever toy,  
A tawdry doll in fairy limelight set . . . .  
And should her song sound cynical and base  
At first, herself ungainly, or her smile  
Monotonous—wait, listen, watch her face :  
The sufferings of those the world calls vile

## **Yvette Guilbert.**

She sings, and as you watch Yvette Guilbert,  
You too will shiver, seeing their despair.

Now to me Yvette Guilbert was exquisite from the first moment. "Exquisite!" I said under my breath, as I first saw her come upon the stage. But it is not by her personal charm that she thrills you, and I admit that her personal charm could be called in question. It must be said, too, that she can do pure comedy, that she can be merely, deliciously, gay. There is one of her songs in which she laughs, chuckles, and trills a rapid flurry of broken words and phrases, with the sudden, spontaneous, irresponsible mirth of a bird. But where she is most herself is in a manner of tragic comedy which has never been seen on the music-hall stage from the beginning. It is the profoundly sad and essentially serious comedy which one sees in Forain's drawings, those rapid outlines which, with the turn of a pencil, give you the whole existence of those base sections of society which our art in England is mainly forced to ignore. People call the art of Forain immoral, they call Yvette Guilbert's songs immoral. That is merely the conventional misuse of a conventional word. The art of Yvette Guilbert is certainly the art of realism. She brings before you the real life-drama of the streets, of the pot-house; she shows you the seamy side of life behind the scenes; she calls things by their right names. But there is not a touch of sensuality about her, she is neither contaminated nor contaminating by what she sings; she is simply a great, impersonal, dramatic artist, who sings realism as others write it.

Her gamut in the purely comic is wide; with an inflection

## *Yvette Guilbert.*

of the voice, a bend of that curious long thin body which seems to be embodied gesture, she can suggest, she can portray, the humour that is dry, ironical, coarse (I will admit), unctuous even. Her voice can be sweet or harsh ; it can chirp, lilt, chuckle, stutter ; it can moan or laugh, be tipsy or distinguished. Nowhere is she conventional ; nowhere does she even resemble any other French singer. Voice, face, gestures, pantomime, all are different, all are purely her own. She is a creature of contrasts, and suggests at once all that is innocent and all that is perverse. She has the pure blue eyes of a child, eyes that are cloudless, that gleam with a wicked ingenuousness, that close in the utter abasement of weariness, that open wide in all the expressionlessness of surprise. Her naïveté is perfect, and perfect, too, is that strange subtle smile of comprehension that closes the period. A great impersonal artist, depending as she does entirely on her expressive power, her dramatic capabilities, her gift for being moved, for rendering the emotions of those in whom we do not look for just that kind of emotion, she affects one all the time as being, after all, removed from what she sings of ; an artist whose sympathy is an instinct, a divination. There is something automatic in all fine histrionic genius, and I find some of the charm of the automaton in *Yvette Guilbert*. The real woman, one fancies, is the slim bright-haired girl who looks so pleased and so amused when you applaud her, and whom it pleases to please you, just because it is amusing. She could not tell you how she happens to be a great artist ; how she has found a voice for the tragic comedy of cities ; how it is that she makes you cry when she sings of sordid

## Yvette Guilbert.

miseries. "That is her secret," we are accustomed to say ; and I like to imagine that it is a secret which she herself has never fathomed.

### II.

The difference between Yvette Guilbert and every one else on the music-hall stage is precisely the difference between Sarah Bernhardt and every one else on the stage of legitimate drama. Elsewhere you may find many admirable qualities, many brilliant accomplishments, but nowhere else that revelation of an extraordinarily interesting personality through the medium of an extraordinarily finished art. Yvette Guilbert has something new to say, and she has discovered a new way of saying it. She has had precursors, but she has eclipsed them. She sings, for instance, songs of Aristide Bruant, songs which he had sung before her, and sung admirably, in his brutal and elaborately careless way. But she has found meanings in them which Bruant, who wrote them, never discovered, or, certainly, could never interpret ; she has surpassed him in his own quality, the *macabre* ; she has transformed the rough material, which had seemed adequately handled until she showed how much more could be done with it, into something artistically fine and distinguished. And just as, in the brutal and *macabre* style, she has done what Bruant was only trying to do, so, in the style, supposed to be traditionally French, of delicate insinuation, she has invented new shades of expression, she has discovered a whole new method of suggestion. And it is here, perhaps, that the new material which she has known, by some happy instinct, how to lay her hands on, has been

## Yvette Guilbert.

of most service to her. She sings, a little cruelly, of the young girl; and the young girl of her songs (that *demoiselle de pensionnat* who is the heroine of one of the most famous of them) is a very different being from the fair abstraction, even rosier and vaguer to the French mind than it is to the English, which stands for the ideal of girlhood. It is, rather, the young girl as Goncourt has rendered her in "Chérie," a creature of awakening, half-unconscious sensations, already at work somewhat abnormally in an anaemic frame, with an intelligence left to feed mainly on itself. And Yvette herself, with her bright hair, the sleepy gold fire of her eyes, her slimness, her gracious awkwardness, her air of delusive innocence, is the very type of the young girl of whom she sings. There is a certain malice in it all, a malicious insistence on the other side of innocence. But there it is, a new figure; and but one among the creations which we owe to this "comic singer," whose comedy is, for the most part, so serious and so tragic.

For the art of Yvette Guilbert is of that essentially modern kind which, even in a subject supposed to be comic, a subject we are accustomed to see dealt with, if dealt with at all, in burlesque, seeks mainly for the reality of things (and reality, if we get deep enough into it, is never comic), and endeavours to find a new, searching, and poignant expression for that. It is an art concerned, for the most part, with all that part of life which the conventions were invented to hide from us. We see a world where people are very vicious and very unhappy; a sordid, miserable world which it is as well sometimes to consider. It is a side of existence which exists; and to see it is not to be attracted

## Yvette Guilbert.

towards it. It is a grey and sordid land, under the sway of "Eros vanné"; it is, for the most part, weary of itself, without rest, and without escape. This is Yvette Guilbert's domain; she sings it, as no one has ever sung it before, with a tragic realism, touched with a sort of grotesque irony, which is a new thing on any stage. The *rouleuse* of the Quartier Bréda, praying to the one saint in her calendar, "Sainte Galette"; the *soularde*, whom the urchins follow and throw stones at in the street; the whole life of the slums and the gutter: these are her subjects, and she brings them, by some marvellous fineness of treatment, into the sphere of art.

It is all a question of *métier*, no doubt, though how far her method is conscious and deliberate it is difficult to say. But she has certain quite obvious qualities, of reticence, of moderation, of suspended emphasis, which can scarcely be other than conscious and deliberate. She uses but few gestures, and these brief, staccato, and for an immediate purpose; her hands, in their long black gloves, are almost motionless, the arms hang limply; and yet every line of the face and body seems alive, alive and repressed. Her voice can be harsh or sweet, as she would have it, can laugh or cry, be menacing or caressing; it is never used for its own sake, decoratively, but for a purpose, for an effect. And how every word tells! Every word comes to you clearly, carrying exactly its meaning; and, somehow, along with the words, an emotion, which you may resolve to ignore, but which will seize upon you, which will go through and through you. Trick or instinct, there it is, the power to make you feel intensely; and that is precisely the final test of a great dramatic artist.

## The Paris Music-Hall.

It is not always realised by Englishmen that England is really the country of the music-hall, the only country where it has taken firm root and flowered elegantly. There is nothing in any part of Europe to compare, in their own way, with the Empire and the Alhambra, either as places luxurious in themselves or as places where a brilliant spectacle is to be seen. It is true that, in England, the art of the ballet has gone down ; the *prima ballerina assoluta* is getting rare, the *primo uomo* is extinct. The training of dancers as dancers leaves more and more to be desired, but that is a defect which we share, at the present time, with most other countries; while the beauty of the spectacle, with us, is unique. Think of "Les Papillons" or of "Old China" at the Empire, and then go and see a fantastic ballet at Paris, at Vienna, or at Berlin ! And it is not only in regard to the ballet, but in regard also to the "turns," that we are so far ahead of all our competitors. I have just been spending a couple of evenings at two of the most characteristic Parisian music-halls, the Folies-Bergère and La Scala. The "chief attraction" of the former was "Une Revue aux Folies-Bergère," a pantomimic show with some dancing ; at the latter, "Messalinette," a "revue," with no dancing at all. There were other turns : vocalists at the Scala, jugglers, and American eccentrics, and the like, at the Folies-Bergère. To see the typical Paris singer you must go to the Scala ; but for everything else the Folies-Bergère is certainly to be preferred.

I have no great admiration for most of our comic gentle-

## The Paris Music-Hall.

men and ladies in London, but I find it still more difficult to take any interest in the comic gentlemen and ladies of Paris. Take Marie Lloyd, for instance, and compare with her, say, Marguerite Deval at the Scala. Both aim at much the same effect, but, contrary to what might have been expected, it is the Englishwoman who shows the greater finesse in the rendering of that small range of sensations to which both give themselves up frankly. Take Polin, who is supposed to express vulgarities with unusual success. Those automatic gestures, flapping and flopping; that dribbling voice, without intonation; that flabby droop and twitch of the face; all that soapy rubbing-in of the expressive parts of the song: I could see no skill in it all, of a sort worth having. The women here sing mainly with their shoulders, for which they seem to have been chosen, and which are often undoubtedly expressive. Often they do not even take the trouble to express anything with voice or face; the face remains blank, the voice trots creakily. It is a doll who repeats its lesson, holding itself up to be seen.

There was one woman at the Folies-Bergère who had genuine talent, Louise Balthy. She reminded me a little of Miss Effie Fay. She was the principal performer in the "Revue aux Folies-Bergère," and she did a parody of Sarah Bernhardt in "Théodora." She was "Miss Barnum," the Music-Hall, and the Dance. In the last she did a series of quick changes (partly on the stage), and indicated, with a vivid skill of parody, Italian, Russian, Spanish, English, and French ways of dancing. She galloped through all her parts with astonishing celerity, putting sharp meanings into things with a gesture, an intonation, a fling or twist of her

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long, supple body. And she had a voice which she knew how to use for her own purposes. No one else showed any real, distinguishable ability. The amusement of the piece was all contained in its costumes and scenery, in the indiscretions of the costumes and the piquant changes of the scenery. We saw the roofs at midnight, with some human cats, the Cirque d'Eté, a “*séance mouvementée*” at a political club, and the house of “la Païva,” the famous courtesan of whom the Goncourts give so interesting an account in their journal. La Païva is seen taking her bath ; she is seen, scarcely more dressed, as the centre of a fête under the Second Empire. And all this rattles and glitters with the regular French clatter of music in the orchestra during all but the fourth and fifth scenes, for which M. Louis Ganne had written music. We are to hear M. Ganne's music, as I have always wanted to hear it, in London, accompanying a Japanese ballet at the Alhambra. It is essentially ballet music, full of clear colour, of gracious movement, with a definite, yet not too emphatic, rhythm, beating out the dancing steps gaily.

The French “revue,” as one sees it here, done somewhat roughly and sketchily, strikes one most of all by its curious want of consecution, its entire reliance on the point of this or that scene, costume, or performer. It has no plan, no idea ; some ideas are flung into it in passing ; but it remains as shapeless as an English pantomime, and not much more interesting. Both appeal to the same undeveloped instincts, the English to a merely childish vulgarity, the French to a vulgarity which is more frankly vicious. Really, I hardly know which is to be preferred. In England we pretend

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that fancy dress is all in the interests of morality ; in France they make no such pretence, and, in dispensing with shoulder-straps, do but make their intentions a little clearer. Go to the Moulin-Rouge and you will see a still clearer object-lesson. The goods in the music-halls are displayed, so to speak, behind glass, in a shop window ; at the Moulin-Rouge they are on the open booths of a street market.

## An Actress and a Play.

If you would see how far acting can go in the direction of greatness without ever becoming great, go to the Adelphi and see Miss Olga Nethersole in "Sapho." Do not concern yourself much with the play, for good or evil. It is Daudet's novel, adapted by Mr. Clyde Fitch, with the aid of the French adaptation, in which Réjane was seen last year at the Coronet. It does not make a good play, but I am quite unable to understand why it brought Miss Nethersole into trouble with the guardians of the stage morality in America. Unless the mere fact of a *collage* is not to be assumed on the stage, there is nothing even faintly improper in it, and in England, at all events, we are not unaccustomed to seeing that particular form of domesticity on the stage. The piece is a crude piece, meant to give emotional opportunities to an actress, and it does give those opportunities. How does Miss Nethersole grapple with them?

Well, I find it difficult to say why she is so good and no better. She begins by being ordinary and affected; gradually she becomes sincere, interesting, intense; then she becomes ordinary again, though not affected. Towards the end of the second act she woke up suddenly for a few moments, she had a fine outburst. But it was in the third act that she was really good, and in this act she was good almost throughout. Now Réjane, in the same part, was wonderful from the first moment she entered the door to the last moment when she closed the door behind her. She was most wonderful, of course, in the moments of crisis, but

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she held one's interest all the time, when she was doing nothing, merely because she was there. That is what an actress should do, and that is what Miss Nethersole did not do. In the third act, it is true, she was good all through the long scene of the supper, where she has to be merely herself at ease ; but she was conspicuously poor in the really very significant scene in the second act, when Sapho comes to Jean Gaussin's rooms with the intention of remaining. In that scene Réjane held one breathless. It was not the calculated seduction of a man by a designing woman (as in "Zaza"), it was a loving woman to whom it is life or death to be loved. Miss Nethersole was the "girl from Maxim's," acting her own part. In the third act she was quite human, she was so simple, direct, and powerful as to be really convincing ; and yet, what was it that was wanting, if one compared her with Réjane ? When I saw Réjane I felt an actual physical sensation ; the woman took me by the throat ; I felt, literally, as if some one were appealing straight to me ; I seemed to be guilty of her tears. Miss Nethersole forced me to admire her, to accept her ; I felt that she was very real, and, as I felt it, I said to myself : "She is acting splendidly." With Réjane it was the feeling that had possessed me ; here I was conscious that a certain feeling was being appealed to, and I recognised the talent of the actress.

After seeing this play, which exists only to be acted, it was an interesting contrast to see, at the Stage Society's performance in the Royalty Theatre, a play which exists at least as much in the book as on the stage, Ibsen's "Lady from the Sea." I wonder whether it loses a little in its

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acceptance of those narrow limits of the footlights? That is the question which I was asking myself as I saw the really excellent performance, in which Miss Janet Achurch was at her best, fine, subtle, sensitive, mysterious, and the other people were for the most part quite adequate. The play is, according to the phrase, a problem-play, but the problem is the problem of all Ibsen's plays: the desire of life, the attraction of life, the mystery of life. Only, we see the eternal question under a new, strange aspect. The sea calls to the blood of this woman, who has married into an inland home; and the sea-cry, which is the desire of more abundant life, of unlimited freedom, of an unknown ecstasy, takes form in a vague Stranger, who has talked to her of the seabirds in a voice like their own, and whose eyes seem to her to have the green changes of the sea. It is an admirable symbol, but when a bearded gentleman with a knapsack on his back climbs over the garden wall and says: "I have come for you; are you coming?" and then tells the woman that he has read of her marriage in the newspaper, it seemed as if the symbol had lost a good deal of its meaning in the gross act of taking flesh. The play haunts one, as it is, but it would have haunted one with a more subtle witchcraft if the Stranger had never appeared upon the stage. Just as Wagner insisted upon a crawling and howling dragon, a Fafner with a name of his own and a considerable presence, so Ibsen brings the supernatural or the subconscious a little crudely into the midst of his persons of the drama. To use symbol, and not to use it in the surprising and inevitable way of the poet, is to fall into the dry, impotent sin of allegory.

## A Comedy of Fine Shades.

IN "The Bishop's Move," a comedy in three acts by John Oliver Hobbes and Murray Carson, given at a special performance at the Garrick Theatre, we have an attempt to do artistically what so many writers for the stage have done without thinking about art at all. There can be little doubt that the story is due to Mr. Carson, and that the writing is Mrs. Craigie's. Mrs. Craigie, no doubt, has given her own turn to the story, which deals, in her favourite way, with priestly and aristocratic persons, but the actual point of sentiment out of which the story is made is scarcely likely to have been deliberately chosen by a writer who has usually set herself problems at once harder and more interesting. Will the young man choose the sweet young woman or the fascinating older woman, or, as his novice's dress suggests, the church? Will the Bishop move in favour of the one or the other lady, and will his move be determined by the temporal interests of his abbey or by the real interests of these three people? The "usual three" stand in the usual relation to one another; the *deus ex machina* only differs from others of his kind in being a Catholic Bishop; the situation, in a word, is the normal situation of "genteel comedy." We know how either of the captains of the drama, Captain Marshall or Captain Hood, would handle it; we see the false sentiment, the tears, the solemn absurdity of the whole thing. Also, we hear the shouts of pit and gallery at the fall of every curtain. How has Mrs. Craigie handled this very ordinary material? The story she has taken frankly, not rejecting

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the aid of her symbolical chess-board, on which people literally move pieces at the critical moments of the play. She has used all sorts of clever little devices for making people do something definite on the stage, one of the most difficult of the playwright's tasks in modern drama. There are organ pipes to be taken to pieces, and we are shown in one act the front of the organ, resting against the side-wall of the drawing-room, and in another act the back of the organ, on the other side of the wall; in the morning-room. There is an amateur printing-press, and a marvelously disarranged proof, for which it is responsible. There are deputations, illuminated addresses, a fresco, a pulpit. So far we have got nothing which the professional playwright could not have given us. But what Mrs. Craigie has done is to give us good writing instead of bad, delicate worldly wisdom instead of vague sentiment or vague cynicism, and the manners of society instead of an imitation of some remote imitation of those manners. Her people are drawn lightly, but they are drawn with a sure hand; they are not strung up to any tragic heights of emotion, but they feel and think and speak just as clever people of our acquaintance seem to feel and think, and certainly speak, when we are brought into not too poignant relations with them. The play is a comedy, and the situations are not allowed to get beyond the control of good manners. We are just enough interested in the people to take a keen notice of what they are doing and saying, without losing our interest in the game as a game. The game is after all the thing, and the skill of the game. When the pawns begin to cry out in the plaintive way of pawns, they are

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hushed before they become disturbing. Barbara, the young girl, is drawn with delicate truth to nature, and one has only to hear her when she lets out her secret so ingenuously to everybody in turn, and then to think of what she would have been if we had come upon her in a "Second in Command" or a "Sweet and Twenty." The shy and rather foolish young man is never foolish without intention; it never occurs to the Duchess that her part requires her to be always explaining herself; the Bishop allows himself the leisure to comment with wise humour on his fellow characters. We are never far from nature, while we seem all the time to be but obeying the rules of the game. It is in this power to play the game on its own artificial lines, and yet to play with pieces made scrupulously after the pattern of nature, that Mrs. Craigie's skill, in this play, seems to me to consist.

How this kind of work will appeal to the general public I can hardly tell. When I saw "Sweet and Twenty" on its first performance, I honestly expected the audience to burst out laughing. On the contrary, the audience thrilled with delight, and audience after audience went on indefinitely thrilling with delight. If the caricature of the natural emotions can give so much pleasure, will a delicate suggestion of them, as in this play, ever mean very much to the public? When humour is always at hand to keep pathos in its place, so that you have no need to be ashamed of the people who are so unconsciously making such fools of themselves, can one expect that an audience will be at all thankful for this reserve, this rejection of the easy tribute of tears? I am afraid the general public cannot do without

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its pocket handkerchief, to stifle laughter or to stifle sobs. Here is a play which makes no demands on the pocket handkerchief, but in which a dramatic writer is seen treating the real people of the audience and the imaginary people of the play as if they were alike ladies and gentlemen.

## Drama: Professional and Unprofessional.

LAST week gave one an amusing opportunity of contrasting the merits and the defects of the professional and the unprofessional kind of play. "The Gay Lord Quex" was revived at the Duke of York's Theatre, and Mr. Alexander produced at the St. James's Theatre a play called "The Finding of Nancy," which had been chosen by the committee of the Playgoers' Club out of a large number of plays sent in for competition. The writer, Miss Netta Syrett, has published one or two novels or collections of stories; but this, as far as I am aware, is her first attempt at a play. Both plays were unusually well acted; Miss Irene Vanbrugh was brilliant, masterly, and effective as Sophy Fullgarney, and Mr. Hare admirably sure and finished as Lord Quex; while Miss Lilian Braithwaite has never acted so well as in the part of Nancy, and Mr. Aubrey Smith was quite good in the part of her lover. The two plays, therefore, may be contrasted without the necessity of making allowances for the way in which they were interpreted on the stage.

Mr. Pinero is a playwright with a sharp sense of the stage, an eye for what is telling, a cynical intelligence which is much more interesting than the uncertain outlook of most of our playwrights. He has no breadth of view, but he has a clear view; he makes his choice out of human nature deliberately, and he deals in his own way with the materials that he selects. Before saying to himself: what would this particular person say or do in these circumstances? he says to himself: what would it be effective on

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the stage for this particular person to do or say? He suggests nothing, he tells you all he knows; he cares to know nothing but what immediately concerns the purpose of his play. The existence of his people begins and ends with their first and last speech on the boards; the rest is silence, because he can tell you nothing about it. Sophy Fullgarney is a remarkably effective character as a stage-character, but, when the play is over, we know no more about her than we should know about her if we had spied upon her, in her own way, from behind some bush or key-hole. We have seen a picturesque and amusing exterior, and that is all. Lord Quex does not, I suppose, profess to be even so much of a character as that, and the other people are mere "humours," quite amusing in their cleverly contrasted ways. When these people talk, they talk with an effort to be natural and another effort to be witty; they are never sincere and without self-consciousness; they never say inevitable things, only things that are effective to say. And they talk in poor English. Mr. Pinero has no sense of style, of the beauty or expressiveness of words. His joking is forced and without ideas; his serious writing is common. In "*The Gay Lord Quex*" he is continually trying to impress upon his audience that he is very audacious and distinctly improper. The improprieties are childish in the innocence of their vulgarity, the audacities are no more than trifling lapses of taste. He shows you the interior of a Duchess's bedroom, and he shows you the Duchess's garter, in a box of other curiosities. He sets his gentlemen and ladies talking in the allusive style which you may overhear whenever you happen to be passing a group

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of London cabmen. The Duchess has written in her diary, "Warm afternoon." That means that she has spent an hour with her lover. Many people in the audience laugh. All the cabmen would have laughed.

Now look for a moment at the play by the amateur and the woman. It is not a satisfactory play as a whole, it is not very interesting in all its developments, some of the best opportunities are shirked, some of the characters (all the characters who are men) are poor. But, in the first place, it is well written. Those people speak a language which is nearer to the language of real life than that used by Mr. Pinero, and when they make jokes there is generally some humour in the joke and some intelligence in the humour. They have ideas and they have feelings. The ideas and the feelings are not always combined with faultless logic into a perfectly clear and coherent presentment of character, it is true. But from time to time we get some of the illusion of life. From time to time something is said or done which we know to be profoundly true. A woman has put into words some delicate instinct of a woman's soul. Here and there is a cry of the flesh, here and there a cry of the mind, which is genuine, which is a part of life. Miss Syrett has much to learn if she is to become a successful dramatist, and she has not as yet shown that she knows men, as well as women; but at least she has begun at the right end. She has begun with human nature and not with the artifices of the stage, she has thought of her characters as people before thinking of them as persons of the drama, she has something to say through them, they are not mere lines in a pattern.

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I am not at all sure that she has the makings of a dramatist, or that if she writes another play it will be better than this one. You do not necessarily get to your destination by taking the right turning at the beginning of the journey. The one certain thing is that if you take the wrong turning at the beginning, and follow it persistently, you will not get to your destination at all. The playwright who writes merely for the stage, who squeezes the breath out of life before he has suited it to his purpose, is at the best only playing a clever game with us. He may amuse us, but he is only playing ping-pong with the emotions. And that is why we should welcome, I think, any honest attempt to deal with life as it is, even if life as it is does not always come into the picture.

## M. Capus in England.

LAST week an excellent Parisian company from the Variétés has been playing "La Veine" of M. Alfred Capus, and this week it is playing "Les Deux Ecoles" of the same entertaining writer. The company is led by Mme. Jeanne Granier, an actress who could not be better in her own way unless she acquired a touch of genius, and she has no genius. She was thoroughly and consistently good, she was lifelike, amusing, never out of key; only, while she reminded one at times of Réjane, she had none of Réjane's magnetism, none of Réjane's exciting naturalness.

The whole company is one of excellent quality, which goes together like the different parts of a piece of machinery. There is Mme. Marie Magnier, so admirable as an old lady of that good, easy-going, intelligent, French type. There is Mlle. Lavallière, with her brilliant eyes and her little *canaille* voice, vulgarly exquisite. There is M. Numès, M. Guy, M. Guitry. M. Guitry is the French equivalent of Mr. Fred Kerr, with all the difference that that change of nationality means. His slow manner, his delaying pantomime, his hard, persistent eyes, his uninflected voice, made up a type which I have never seen more faithfully presented on the stage. And there is M. Brasseur. He is a kind of French Arthur Roberts, but without any of that extravagant energy which carries the English comedian triumphantly through all his absurdities. M. Brasseur is preposterously natural, full of aplomb and impertinence. He never flags, never hesitates; it is impossible to take him seriously, as we say of delightful, mischievous people in real life.

## M. Capus in England.

I have been amused to see a discussion in the papers as to whether "La Veine" is a fit play to be presented to the English public. "Max" has defended it in his own way in the *Saturday Review*, and I hasten to say that I quite agree with his defence. Above all, I agree with him when he says : "Let our dramatic critics reserve their indignation for those other plays, in which the characters are self-conscious, winkers and gigglers over their own misconduct, taking us into their confidence, and inviting us to wink and giggle with them." There, certainly, is the offence ; there is a kind of vulgarity which seems native to the lower English mind and to the lower English stage. M. Capus is not a moralist, but it is not needful to be a moralist. He is a skilful writer for the stage, who takes an amiable, somewhat superficial, quietly humorous view of things, and he takes people as he finds them in a particular section of the upper and lower middle classes in Paris, not going further than the notion which they have of themselves, and presenting that simply, without comment. We get a foolish young millionaire and a foolish young person in a flower shop, who take up a *collage* together in the most casual way possible, and they are presented as two very ordinary people, neither better nor worse than a great many other ordinary people, who do or do not do much the same thing. They at least do not "wink or giggle" ; they take things with the utmost simplicity, and they call upon us to imitate their bland unconsciousness.

"La Veine" is a study of luck, in the person of a very ordinary man, not more intelligent or more selfish or more attractive than the average, but one who knows when to

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take the luck which comes his way. The few, quite average, incidents of the play are put together with neatness and probability, and without sensational effects, or astonishing curtains; the people are very natural and probable, very amusing in their humors, and they often say humorous things, not in so many set words, but by a clever adjustment of natural and probable nothings. Throughout the play there is an amiable and entertaining common sense which never becomes stage convention; these people talk like real people, only much more à-propos.

In "Les Deux Ecoles" the philosophy which could be discerned in "La Veine," that of taking things as they are and taking them comfortably, is carried to a still further development. I am prepared to be told that the whole philosophy is horribly immoral; perhaps it is; but the play, certainly, is not. It is vastly amusing, its naughtiness is so naïve, so tactfully frank, that even the American daughter might take her mother to see it, without fear of corrupting the innocence of age. "On peut très bien vivre sans être la plus heureuse des femmes": that is one of the morals of the piece; and, the more you think over questions of conduct, the more you realise that you might just as well not have thought about them at all, might be another. The incidents by which these excellent morals are driven home are incidents of the same order as those in "La Veine," and not less entertaining. The mounting, simple as it was, was admirably planned; the stage-pictures full of explicit drollery. And, as before, the whole company worked with the effortless unanimity of a perfect piece of machinery.

## M. Capus in England.

A few days after seeing "La Veine," I went to Wyndham's Theatre to see a revival of Sir Francis Burnand's "Betsy." "Betsy," of course, is adapted from the French, though, by an accepted practice which seems to me dishonest, in spite of its acceptance, that fact is not mentioned on the play-bill. But the form is undoubtedly English, very English. What vulgarity, what pointless joking, what pitiable attempts to serve up old impromptus *réchauffés*! I found it impossible to stay to the end. Some actors, capable of better things, worked hard; there was a terrible air of effort in these attempts to be sprightly in fetters, and in rusty fetters. Think of "La Veine" at its worst, and then think of "Betsy"! I must not ask you to contrast the actors; it would be almost unfair. We have not a company of comedians in England who can be compared for a moment with Mme. Jeanne Granier's company. We have here and there a good actor, a brilliant comic actor, in one kind or another of emphatic comedy; but wherever two or three comedians meet on the English stage, they immediately begin to check-mate, or to outbid, or to shout down one another. No one is content, or no one is able, to take his place in an orchestra in which it is not allotted to every one to play a solo.

## A Double Enigma.

WHEN it was announced that Mrs. Tree was to give a translation of "L'Enigme" of M. Paul Hervieu at Wyndham's Theatre, the play was announced under the title "Which?" and as "Which?" it appeared on the placards. Suddenly new placards appeared, with a new title, not at all appropriate to the piece, "Cæsar's Wife." Rumours of a late decision, or indecision, of the censor were heard. The play had not been prohibited, but it had been adapted to more polite ears. But how? That was the question. I confess that to me the question seemed insoluble. Here is the situation as it exists in the play; nothing could be simpler, more direct, more difficult to tamper with. Two brothers, Raymond and Gérard de Gourgiran, are in their country house, with their two wives, Giselle and Léonore, and two guests, the old Marquis de Neste and the young M. de Vivarce. The brothers surprise Vivarce on the stairs: was he coming from the room of Giselle or of Léonore? The women are summoned; both deny everything; it is impossible for the audience, as for the husbands, to come to any conclusion. A shot is heard outside: Vivarce has killed himself, so that he may save the reputation of the woman he loves. Then the self-command of Léonore gives way; she avows all in a piercing shriek. After that there is some unnecessary moralising ("Là-bas un cadavre! Ici, des sanglots de captive!" and the like), but the play is over.

Now, the situation is perfectly precise; it is not, perhaps, very intellectually significant, but there it is, a striking

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dramatic situation. Above all, it is frank; there are no evasions, no sentimental lies, no hypocrisies before facts. If adultery may not be referred to on the English stage except at the Gaiety, between a wink and a laugh, then such a play becomes wholly impossible. Not at all: listen. We are told to suppose that Vivarce and Léonore have had a possibly quite harmless flirtation; and instead of Vivarce being found on his way from Léonore's room, he has merely been walking with Léonore in the garden: at midnight, remember, and after her husband has gone to bed. In order to lead up to this, a preposterous speech has been put into the mouth of the Marquis de Neste, an idiotic rhapsody about love and the stars, and I forget what else, which I imagine we are to take as an indication of Vivarce's sentiments as he walks with Léonore in the garden at midnight. But all these precautions are in vain; the audience is never deceived for an instant. A form of words has been used, like the form of words by which certain lies become technically truthful. The whole point of the play: has a husband the right to kill his wife or his wife's lover if he discovers that his wife has been unfaithful to him? is obviously not a question of whether a husband may kill a gentleman who has walked with his wife in the garden, even after midnight. The force of the original situation comes precisely from the certainty of the fact and the uncertainty of the person responsible for it. "Cæsar's Wife" may lend her name for a screen; the screen is no disguise; the play remains what it was in its moral bearing; a dramatic stupidity has been imported into it, that is all. Here, then, in addition to the enigma of the play, is a

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second, not so easily explained, enigma: the enigma of the censor, and of why he "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." The play, I must confess, does not seem to me, as it seems to certain French critics, "une pièce qui tient du chef-d'œuvre . . . la tragédie des maîtres antiques et de Shakespeare." To me it is rather an insubstantial kind of ingenuity, ingenuity turning in a circle. As a tragic episode, the dramatisation of a striking incident, it has force and simplicity, the admirable quality of directness. Occasionally the people are too eager to express the last shade of the author's meaning, as in the conversation between Neste and Vivarce, when the latter decides to commit suicide, or in the supplementary comments when the action is really at an end. But I have never seen a piece which seemed to have been written so kindly and so consistently for the benefit of the actors. There are six characters of equal importance; and each in turn absorbs the whole flood of the limelight.

The other piece which made Saturday evening interesting was a version of "Au Téléphone," one of Antoine's recent successes at his theatre in Paris. It was brutal and realistic, it made just the appeal of an accident really seen, and, so far as success in horrifying one is concerned, it was successful. A husband hearing the voice of his wife through the telephone, at the moment when some murderous ruffians are breaking into the house, hearing her last cry, and helpless to aid her, is as ingeniously unpleasant a situation as can well be imagined. It is brought before us with unquestionable skill; it makes us as uncomfortable as it wishes to make us. But such a situation has absolutely no

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artistic value, because terror without beauty and without significance is not worth causing. When the husband, with his ear at the telephone, hears his wife tell him that some one is forcing the window-shutters with a crowbar, we feel, it is true, a certain sympathetic suspense; but compare this crude onslaught on the nerves with the profound and delicious terror that we experience when, in "*La Mort de Tintagiles*" of Maeterlinck, an invisible force pushes the door softly open, a force intangible and irresistible as death. In his acting Mr. Charles Warner was powerful, thrilling; it would be difficult to say, under the circumstances, that he was extravagant, for what extravagance, under the circumstances, would be improbable? He had not, no doubt, what I see described as "*le jeu simple et terrible*" of Antoine, a dry, hard, intellectual grip on horror; he had the ready abandonment to emotion of the average emotional man. Mr. Warner has an irritating voice and manner, but he has emotional power, not fine nor subtle, but genuine; he feels, and he makes you feel. He has the quality, in short, of the play itself, but a quality more tolerable in the actor, who is concerned only with the rendering of a given emotion, than in the playwright, whose business it is to choose, heighten, and dignify the emotion which he gives to him to render.

## Three Problem Plays.

### I. "The Marrying of Ann Leete."

IT was for the production of such plays as Mr. Granville Barker's that the Stage Society was founded, and it is doing good service to the drama in producing them. "The Marrying of Ann Leete," which was performed yesterday afternoon at the Royalty Theatre, is the cleverest and most promising new play that I have seen for a long time ; but it cannot be said to have succeeded even with the Stage Society audience, and no ordinary theatrical manager is very likely to produce it. I am told that the author is a man of twenty-three or twenty-four, and that he has been an actor for many years. He is young ; his play is immature, too crowded with people, too knotted up with motives, too inconclusive in effect. He knows the stage, and his knowledge has enabled him to use the stage for his own purposes, inventing a kind of technique of his own, doing one or two things which have never, or never so deftly, been done before. But he is something besides all that ; he can think, he can write, and he can suggest real men and women. The play opens in the dark, and remains for some time brilliantly ambiguous. People, late eighteenth-century people, talk with bewildering abruptness, not less bewildering point ; they, their motives, their characters, swim slowly into daylight. Some of the dialogue is, as the writer says of politics, "a game for clever children, women, and fools" ; it is a game demanding close attention. A courtly indolence, an intellectual blackguardism, is in the air ; people walk,

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as it seems, aimlessly in and out, and the game goes on ; it fills one with excitement, the excitement of following a trail. It is a trail of ideas, these people think, and they act because they have thought. They know the words they use, they use them with deliberation, their hearts are in their words. Their actions, indeed, are disconcerting ; but these people, they and their disconcerting actions, are interesting, hold one's mind in suspense.

Mr. Granville Barker has tried to tell the whole history of a family, and he interests us in every member of that family. He plays them like chessmen, and their moves excite us as chess excites the mind. They express ideas ; the writer has thought out their place in the scheme of things, and he has put his own faculty of thinking into their heads. They talk for effect, or rather for disguise ; it is part of their keen sense of the game. They talk at cross-purposes, as they wander in and out of the garden terrace ; they plan out their lives, and life comes and surprises them by the way. Then they speak straight out of their hearts, sometimes crudely, sometimes with a naïveté which seems laughable ; and they act on sudden impulses, accepting the consequences when they come. They live an artificial life, knowing lies to be lies, and choosing them ; they are civilised, they try to do their duty by society ; only, at every moment, some ugly gap opens in the earth, right in their path, and they have to stop, consider, choose a new direction. They seem to go their own way, almost without guiding ; and indeed may have escaped almost literally out of their author's hands. The last scene is an admirable episode, a new thing on the stage, full of truth within its own limits ;

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but it is an episode, not a conclusion, much less a solution. Mr. Barker can write : he writes in short, sharp sentences, which go off like pistol-shots, and he keeps up the firing, from every corner of the stage. He brings his people on and off with an unconventionality which comes of knowing the resources of the theatre, and of being unfettered by the traditions of its technique. The scene with the gardener in the second act has extraordinary technical merit, and it has the art which conceals its art. There are other inventions in the play, not all quite so convincing. Sometimes Mr. Barker, in doing the right or the clever thing, does it just not quite strongly enough to carry it against opposition. The opposition is the firm and narrow mind of the British playgoer. Such plays as Mr. Barker's are apt to annoy without crushing. The artist, who is yet an imperfect artist, bewilders the world with what is novel in his art ; the great artist convinces the world. Mr. Barker is young : he will come to think with more depth and less tumult ; he will come to work with less prodigality and more mastery of means. But he has energy already, and a sense of what is absurd and honest in the spectacle of this game, in which the pawns seem to move of themselves.

## II. "The New Idol."

It was an interesting experiment on the part of the Stage Society to give a translation of "La Nouvelle Idole," one of those pieces by which M. François de Curel has reached that very actual section of the French public which is interested in ideas. "The New Idol" is a modern play of the most

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characteristically modern type ; its subject-matter is largely medical, it deals with the treatment of cancer ; we are shown a doctor's laboratory, with a horrible elongated diagram of the inside of the human body ; a young girl's lungs are sounded in the doctor's drawing-room ; nearly every character talks science, and very little but science. When they cease talking science, which they talk well, with earnestness and with knowledge, and try to talk love or intrigue, they talk badly, as if they were talking of things which they knew nothing about. Now, personally, this kind of talk does not interest me ; it makes me feel uncomfortable. But I am ready to admit that it is justified if I find that the dramatic movement of the play requires it, that it is itself an essential part of the action. In "The New Idol" I think this is partly the case. The other medical play which has lately been disturbing Paris, "*Les Avariés*," does not seem to me to fulfil this condition at any moment : it is a pamphlet from beginning to end, it is not a satisfactory pamphlet, and it has no other excuse for existence. But M. de Curel has woven his problem into at least a semblance of action ; the play is not a mere discussion of irresistible physical laws ; the will enters into the problem, and will fights against will, and against not quite irresistible physical laws. The suggestion of love interests, which come to nothing, and have no real bearing on the main situation, seems to me a mistake ; it complicates things, things which must appear to us so very real if we are to accept them at all, with rather a theatrical kind of complication. M. de Curel is more a thinker than a dramatist, as he has shown lately in the very original, interesting, impossible "*Fille Sauvage*." He grapples with

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serious matters seriously, and he argues well, with a closely woven structure of arguments; some of them bringing a kind of hard and naked poetry out of mere closeness of thinking and closeness of seeing. In "The New Idol" there is some dialogue, real dialogue, natural give-and-take, about the fear of death and the horror of indestructibility (a variation on one of the finest of Coventry Patmore's odes) which seemed to me admirable: it held the audience because it was direct speech, expressing a universal human feeling in the light of a vivid individual crisis. But such writing as this was rare; for the most part it was the problem itself which insisted on occupying our attention, or, distinct from this, the too theatrical characters.

### III. "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

THE Stage Society has shown the courage of its opinions by giving an unlicensed play, "Mrs. Warren's Profession," one of the "unpleasant plays" of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, at the theatre of the New Lyric Club. It was well acted, with the exception of two of the characters, and the part of Mrs. Warren was played by Miss Fanny Brough, one of the cleverest actresses on the English stage, with remarkable ability. The action was a little cramped by the smallness of the stage, but, for all that, the play was seen under quite fair conditions, conditions under which it could be judged as an acting play and as a work of art. It is brilliantly clever, with a close, detective cleverness, all made up of merciless logic and unanswerable common sense. The principal characters are well drawn, the scenes are constructed

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with a great deal of theatrical skill, the dialogue is telling, the interest is held throughout. To say that the characters, without exception, are ugly in their vice and ugly in their virtue; that they all have, men and women, something of the cad in them; that their language is the language of vulgar persons, is, perhaps, only to say that Mr. Shaw has chosen, for artistic reasons, to represent such people just as they are. But there is something more to be said. "*Mrs. Warren's Profession*" is not a representation of life; it is a discussion about life. Now, discussion on the stage may be interesting. Why not? Discussion is the most interesting thing in the world, off the stage; it is the only thing that makes an hour pass vividly in society; but when discussion ends art has not begun. It is interesting to see a sculptor handling bits of clay, sticking them on here, scraping them off there; but that is only the interest of a process. When he has finished I will consider whether his figure is well or ill done; until he has finished I can have no opinion about it. It is the same thing with discussion on the stage. The subject of Mr. Shaw's discussion is what is called a "*nasty*" one. That is neither here nor there, though it may be pointed out that there is no essential difference between the problem that he discusses and the problem that is at the root of "*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*".

But Mr. Shaw, I believe, is never without his polemical intentions, and I should like, for a moment, to ask whether his discussion of his problem, taken on its own merits, is altogether the best way to discuss things. Mr. Shaw has an ideal of life: he asks that men and women should be

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perfectly reasonable, that they should clear their minds of cant, and speak out everything that is in their minds. He asks for cold and clear logic, and when he talks about right and wrong he is really talking about right and wrong logic. Now logic is not the mainspring of every action, nor is justice only the inevitable working out of an equation. Humanity, as Mr. Shaw sees it, moves by clockwork ; and must be regulated as a watch is, and praised or blamed simply in proportion to its exactitude in keeping time. Humanity, as Mr. Shaw knows, does not move by clockwork, and the ultimate justice will have to take count of more exceptions and irregularities than Mr. Shaw takes count of. There is a great living writer who has brought to bear on human problems as consistent a logic as Mr. Shaw's, together with something which Mr. Shaw disdains. Mr. Shaw's logic is sterile, because it is without sense of touch, sense of sight, or sense of hearing ; once set going it is warranted to go straight, and to go through every obstacle. Tolstoi's logic is fruitful, because it allows for human weakness, because it understands, and because to understand is, among other things, to pardon. In a word, the difference between the spirit of Tolstoi and the spirit of Mr. Shaw is the difference between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of Euclid.

## “Monna Vanna.”

In his earlier plays Maeterlinck invented a world of his own, which was a sort of projection into space of the world of nursery legends and of childish romances. It was at once very abstract and very local. There was a castle by the sea, a “well at the world’s end,” a pool in a forest; princesses with names out of the “Morte d’Arthur” lost crowns of gold, and blind beggars without a name wandered in the darkness of eternal terror. Death was always the scene-shifter of the play, and destiny the stage-manager. The people who came and went had the blind gestures of marionettes, and one pitied their helplessness. Pity and terror had indeed gone to the making of this drama, in a sense much more literal than Aristotle’s.

In all these plays there were few words and many silences, and the words were ambiguous, hesitating, often repeated, like the words of peasants or children. They were rarely beautiful in themselves, rarely even significant, but they suggested a singular kind of beauty and significance, through their adjustment in a pattern or arabesque. Atmosphere, the suggestion of what was not said, was everything; and in an essay in “Le Trésor des Humbles” Maeterlinck told us that in drama, as he conceived it, it was only the words that were not said which mattered.

Gradually the words began to mean more in the scheme of the play. With “Aglavaine et Sélysette” we got a drama of the inner life, in which there was little action, little effective dramatic speech, but in which people thought

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about action and talked about action, and discussed the morality of things and their meaning, very beautifully. “Monna Vanna” is a development out of “Aglavaine et Sélysette,” and in it for the first time Maeterlinck has represented the conflicts of the inner life in an external form, making drama, while the people who undergo them discuss them frankly at the moment of their happening.

In a significant passage of “La Sagesse et la Destinée,” Maeterlinck says: “On nous affirme que toutes les grandes tragédies ne nous offrent pas d'autre spectacle que la lutte de l'homme contre la fatalité. Je crois, au contraire, qu'il n'existe pas une seule tragédie où la fatalité règne réellement. J'ai beau les parcourir, je n'en trouve pas une où le héros combatte le destin pur et simple. Au fond, ce n'est jamais le destin, c'est toujours la sagesse, qu'il attaque.” And, on the preceding page, he says: “Observons que les poètes tragiques osent très rarement permettre au sage de paraître un moment sur la scène. Ils craignent une âme haute parce que les événements la craignent.” Now it is this conception of life and of drama that we find in “Monna Vanna.” We see the conflict of wisdom, personified in the old man Marco and in the instinctively wise Giovanna, with the tragic folly personified in the husband Guido, who rebels against truth and against life, and loses even that which he would sacrifice the world to keep. The play is full of lessons in life, and its deepest lesson is a warning against the too ready acceptance of this or that aspect of truth or of morality. Here is a play in which almost every character is noble, in which treachery becomes a virtue, a lie becomes

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more vital than truth, and only what we are accustomed to call virtue shows itself mean, petty, and even criminal. And it is most like life, as life really is, in this: that at any moment the whole course of the action might be changed, the position of every character altered, or even reversed, by a mere decision of the will, open to each, and that things happen as they do because it is impossible, in the nature of each, that the choice could be otherwise. Character, in the deepest sense, makes the action, and there is something in the movement of the play which resembles the grave and reasonable march of a play of Sophocles, in which men and women deliberate wisely and not only passionately, in which it is not only the cry of the heart and of the senses which takes the form of drama.

In Maeterlinck's earlier plays, in “*Les Aveugles*,” “*Intérieur*,” and even “*Pelléas et Mélisande*,” he is dramatic after a new, experimental fashion of his own; “*Monna Vanna*” is dramatic in the obvious sense of the word. The action moves, and moves always in an interesting, even in a telling, way. But at the same time I cannot but feel that something has been lost. The speeches, which were once so short as to be enigmatical, are now too long, too explanatory; they are sometimes rhetorical, and have more logic than life. The playwright has gained experience, the thinker has gained wisdom, but the curious artist has lost some of his magic. No doubt the wizard had drawn his circle too small, but now he has stepped outside his circle into a world which no longer obeys his formulas. In casting away his formulas, has he the big human mastery which alone could replace them? “*Monna Vanna*” is a

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remarkable and beautiful play, but it is not a masterpiece. “*La Mort de Tintagiles*” was a masterpiece of a tiny, too deliberate, kind ; but it did something which no one had ever done before. We must still, though we have seen “*Monna Vanna*,” wait, feeling that Maeterlinck has not given us all that he is capable of giving us.

## The Question of Censorship.

THE letter of protest which appeared in the *Times* of Friday, June 30, signed by Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Meredith, and Mr. Hardy, the three highest names in contemporary English literature, will, I hope, have done something to save the literary reputation of England from such a fate as one eminent dramatic critic sees in store for it. "Once more," says the *Athenæum*, "the caprice of our censure brings contempt upon us, and makes, or should make, us the laughing-stock of Europe." The *Morning Post* is more lenient, and is "sincerely sorry for the unfortunate censor," because "he has immortalised himself by prohibiting the most beautiful play of his time, and must live to be the laughing-stock of all sensible people."

Now the question is, which is really made ridiculous by this ridiculous episode of the prohibition of Maeterlinck's "*Monna Vanna*," England or Mr. Redford? Mr. Redford is a gentleman of whom I only know that he is not himself a man of letters, and that he has not given any public indication of an intelligent interest in literature as literature. If, as a private person, before his appointment to the official post of censor of the drama, he had expressed in print an opinion on any literary or dramatic question, that opinion would have been taken on its own merits, and would have carried only the weight of its own contents. The official appointment, which gives him absolute power over the public life or death of a play, gives to the public no guarantee of his fitness for the post. So far as the public can judge, he was chosen as the typical "man in the street,"

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the “ plain man who wants a plain answer,” the type of the “ golden mean,” or mediocrity. We hear that he is honest and diligent, that he reads every word of every play sent for his inspection. These are the virtues of the capable clerk, not of the penetrating judge. Now the position, if it is to be taken seriously, must require delicate discernment as well as inflexible uprightness. Is Mr. Redford capable of discriminating between what is artistically fine and what is artistically ignoble? If not, he is certainly incapable of discriminating between what is morally fine and what is morally ignoble. It is useless for him to say that he is not concerned with art, but with morals. They cannot be disengaged, because it is really the art which makes the morality. In other words, morality does not consist in the facts of a situation or in the words of a speech, but in the spirit which informs the whole work. Whatever may be the facts of “*Monna Vanna*” (and I contend that they are entirely above reproach, even as facts), no one capable of discerning the spirit of a work could possibly fail to realise that the whole tendency of the play is noble and invigorating. All this, all that is essential, evidently escapes Mr. Redford. He licenses what the *Times* rightly calls “such a gross indecency as ‘The Girl from Maxim’s.’” But he refuses to license “*Monna Vanna*,” and he refuses to state his reason for withholding the licence. The fact is, that moral questions are discussed in it, not taken for granted, and the plain man, the man in the street, is alarmed whenever people begin to discuss moral questions. “*The Girl from Maxim’s*” is merely indecent, it raises no problems. “*Monna Vanna*” raises problems. Therefore, says the Censor, it must be

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suppressed. By his decision in regard to this play of Maeterlinck, Mr. Redford has of course conclusively proved his unfitness for his post. But that is only one part of the question. The question is: could any one man be found on whose opinion all England might safely rely for its dramatic instruction and entertainment? I do not think such a man could be found. With Mr. Redford, as the *Times* puts it, "any tinge of literary merit seems at once to excite his worst suspicions." But with a censor whose sympathies were too purely literary, literary in too narrow a sense, would not scruples of some other kind begin to intrude themselves, scruples of the student who cannot tolerate an innocent jesting with "serious" things, scruples of the moralist who must choose between Maeterlinck and d'Annunzio, between Tolstoi and Ibsen? I cannot so much as think of a man in all England who would be capable of justifying the existence of the censorship. Is it, then, merely Mr. Redford who is made ridiculous by this ridiculous episode, or is it not, after all, England, which has given us the liberty of the press and withheld from us the liberty of the stage?

## Music in the Theatre.

IT is the constant endeavour of the arts to do one another's work, to occupy one another's province. Literature, which, as a working craft, is a compromise between speech and song, does indeed, with some measure of success, steal from both music and painting, while it can be correctly enough qualified by terms drawn from sculpture and architecture. But when painting tries to compete with music, as in the Valkyries of Fantin-Latour and of Henry de Groux, or when music tries to compete with painting, as in some of the symphonies of Richard Strauss or the Nocturnes of Claude Debussy, each art, it seems to me, loses in real qualities what it gains in make-believe qualities. But the worst example of this further kind of artistic adultery consists in the indiscriminate mixing of words and music which we hear in most theatres, in a crude form, during the performance of a melodrama; in some theatres, in a less crude but not less objectionable form, during the performance of a tragedy; and, finally, in its most pretentious form of all, a would-be artistic creation, like Strauss' "Enoch Arden."

We all know the few meek bars of soft music which steal up from the orchestra at the most sentimental moments of a sentimental piece at the Adelphi or the Vaudeville. No one, I suppose, takes very seriously those feeble attempts to fasten his wandering attention. They persist, like other self-evident absurdities; but no one defends them. But when a musician like Mr. Coleridge-Taylor or Mr. Percy Pitt writes "incidental" music for a play such as "Ulysses"

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or "Paolo and Francesca," no one seems to realise that this is merely the carrying of an absurdity to a still more absurd length. Indeed, a critic in the *Times* of March 7 complains that "unfortunately the authors of plays, and especially of poetical plays, seem to have little sympathy for the sister art of music, and appear to regard it as a harmful necessary adjunct." This critic, speaking of Mr. Pitt's music (including "persistent *mélodrame*") laments "the baneful influence of managerial scissors." "Where," he asks, "was the music in that other scene when, on Paolo's acknowledging his love for his brother's wife, Giovanni hisses out the words, 'Thou hast said it ! ?'"

I am quite prepared to admit that a managerial scissors which sheared at random, cutting here and sparing there, can hardly be defended without reservations. But I contend that the managerial scissors did not cut enough. When the curtain is down let there be as much incidental music as you please, whether specially written for the performance by a composer of reputation like Mr. Pitt or Mr. Coleridge-Taylor, or taken from the appropriate work of a composer, like Tschaikowsky's music to "Hamlet," which I heard with so much pleasure last week in the intervals of Mr. Forbes-Robertson's performance. There is no real reason why music of the most casual kind, so long as it is good music, and there is a good orchestra to play it, should not be played during the intervals of a play to which a musical setting would be obviously absurd, like a farce, or a play of Mr. Pinero. But the intrusion of a single note of music, except when words are sung to that music, or when troops are represented silently marching to music, or when a guitar

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is supposed to be heard in the street, or for some similar reason, is an intrusion of the most useless, objectionable, and wholly inartistic kind.

A musical critic of my acquaintance complained to me, at the first performance of "Paolo and Francesca," that he could not hear the music properly, because the people on the stage would talk while it was going on. His criticism was perfectly just. Either you go to hear the words, and then you do not want to be disturbed and annoyed by music which clashes with those words, the spoken rhythm and the musical rhythm being invariably contradictory, or else you go to hear the music, and then you do not want to hear it in snaps and gasps, with a great many unnecessary words inserted. What would you think of a manager who provided a series of magic-lantern pictures as an accompaniment to a serious play, and who called off your attention, at the most serious moments of that play, by flashing a symbolical representation of them on a curtain at the back of the stage? Yet that would be doing precisely what those managers are doing who give us music in the orchestra during the performance of a play on the stage.

It is one step further, along a downward path, when we find a composer like Schumann writing music to be played by the orchestra while Byron's "Manfred" is recited, or a composer like Richard Strauss writing music for the piano to be played while Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" is recited. I had an opportunity of hearing both, only the other day, on the occasion of Herr Strauss' visit to London. Schumann's music suffered most, partly because it had so much more to lose, but both performances were a torture to me.

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Herr Strauss conducted the "Manfred" with great delicacy, and I was waiting anxiously for the most delicate passage in the music, the *lento* at the beginning of Act III. It came; I believe it was beautifully played, but while it was being played, *pianissimo*, Herr von Possart was shouting in a strenuous voice, and in German:

If that I did not know philosophy  
To be of all our vanities the motliest,  
The merest word that ever fooled the ear  
From out the schoolman's jargon . . .

The delicate music was lost, buried under the weight of a German voice and the dust of Byron's verses.

The systematic distortion of words by music and of music by words seems to have culminated in Debussy's setting of Maeterlinck's "Pelléas et Mélisande," lately produced at the Opéra-Comique. I have not heard it, or seen the music, but I have read accounts of it, written from every point of view, and I have talked with people who have heard it. Miss Alma-Tadema gives her impression of it, which seems to me as if it must be a just one, in her article on "Monna Vanna" in the *Fortnightly Review*. M. Vincent d'Indy, the composer, in a very generous article in that excellent French magazine *L'Occident*, the best and most thoughtful of the younger French reviews, has said all there is to be said in its defence. It is an attempt to write music without either melody or rhythm, in an "uninterrupted stream of harmony," and to set this music murmuring in the orchestra while the actors or singers speak or sing their words to notes without sequence or connection. Of the voices, we

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are told by M. Raymond Bouyer in the *Nouvelle Revue*, "Le chant des acteurs n'est qu'une déclamation des voix ; cette déclamation n'est qu'une psalmodie sans forme et sans couleur, en une crépuscule." Of the orchestra, we are told by M. Camille Bellaigue in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, "Il fait peu de bruit, je l'accorde, mais un vilain petit bruit."

## On Crossing Stage to Right.

IF you look into the actors' prompt-books, the most frequent direction which you will find is this: "Cross stage to right." It is not a mere direction, it is a formula ; it is not a formula only, but a universal remedy. Whenever the action seems to flag, or the dialogue to become weak or wordy, you must "cross stage to right" ; no matter what is wrong with the play, this will set it right. We have heard so much of the "action" of a play, that the stage-manager in England seems to imagine that dramatic action is literally a movement of people across the stage, even if for no other reason than for movement's sake. Is the play weak? He tries to strengthen it, poor thing, by sending it out walking for its health.

If we take drama with any seriousness, as an art as well as an improvisation, we shall realise that one of its main requirements is that it should make pictures. That is the lesson of Bayreuth, and when one comes away, the impression which remains, almost longer than the impression of the music itself, is that grave, regulated motion of the actors. As I have said elsewhere, no actor makes a gesture which has not been regulated for him ; there is none of that unintelligent haphazard known as being "natural" ; these people move like music, or with that sense of motion which it is the business of painting to arrest. But here, of course, I am speaking of the poetic drama, of drama which does not aim at the realistic representation of modern life. Maeterlinck should be acted in this solemn way, in a kind of convention ; but I admit that you cannot act Ibsen in quite the same way.

## On Crossing Stage to Right.

The other day, when Mme. Jeanne Granier's company came over here to give us some lessons in acting, I watched a little scene in "La Veine," which was one of the telling scenes of the play: Guitry and Brasseur standing face to face for some minutes, looking at their watches, and then waiting, each with a single, fixed expression on his face, in which the whole temperament of each is summed up. One is inclined to say: No English actor could have done it. Perhaps; but then, no English stage-manager would have let them do it. They would have been told to move, to find "business," to indulge in gesture which would not come naturally to them. Again, in "Tartuffe," when, at the end, the hypocrite is exposed and led off to prison, Coquelin simply turns his back on the audience, and stands, with head sullenly down, making no movement; then, at the end, he turns half-round and walks straight off, on the nearer side of the stage, giving you no more than a momentary glimpse of a convulsed face, fixed into a definite, gross, raging mood. It would have taken Mr. Tree five minutes to get off the stage, and he would have walked to and fro with a very multiplication of gesture, trying on one face, so to speak, after another. Would it have been so effective, that is to say, so real?

A great part of the art of French acting consists in knowing when and how not to do things. Their blood helps them, for there is movement in their blood, and they have something to restrain. But they have realised the art there is in being quite still, in speaking naturally, as people do when they are really talking, in fixing attention on the words they are saying and not on their antics while saying them.

## On Crossing Stage to Right.

The other day, in the first act of "The Bishop's Move" at the Garrick, there is a Duchess talking to a young novice in the refectory of a French abbey. After standing talking to him for a few minutes, with only such movements as would be quite natural under the circumstances, she takes his arm, not once only but twice, and walks him up and down in front of the footlights, for no reason in the world except to "cross stage to right." The stage trick was so obvious that it deprived the scene at once of any pretence to reality.

The fact is, that we do not sufficiently realise the difference between what is dramatic and what is merely theatrical. Drama is made to be acted, and the finest "literary" play in the world, if it wholly fails to interest people on the stage, will have wholly failed in its first and most essential aim. But the finer part of drama is implicit in the words and in the development of the play, and not in its separate small details of literal "action." Two people should be able to sit quietly in a room, without ever leaving their chairs, and to hold our attention breathless for as long as the playwright likes. Given a good play, French actors are able to do that. Given a good play, English actors are not allowed to do it.

Is it not partly the energy, the restless energy, of the English character which prevents our actors from ever sitting or standing still on the stage? We are a nation of travellers, of sailors, of business people; and all these have to keep for ever moving. Our dances are the most vigorous and athletic of dances, they carry us all over the stage, with all kinds of leaping and kicking movements. Our music-hall

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performers have invented a kind of clowning peculiar to this country, in which kicking and leaping are also a part of the business. Our melodramas are constructed on more movable planes, with more formidable collapses and collisions, than those of any other country. Is not, then, the persistent English habit of "crossing stage to right" a national characteristic, ingrained in us, and not only a matter of training? It is this reflection which hinders me from hoping, with much confidence, that a reform in stage-management will lead to a really quieter and simpler way of acting. But might not the experiment be tried? Might not some stage-manager come forward and say: "For heaven's sake stand still, my dear ladies and gentlemen, and see if you cannot interest your audience without moving more than twice the length of your own feet?"

## Suggestions to Managers.

I HAVE been waiting for a quiet moment in which to make a few complaints or suggestions about some practical matters connected with the stage. I take them as they recur to my memory.

One is this: Why is the hour at which performances begin so rarely printed on the tickets? An afternoon performance may begin at two, at two-thirty, or at three; an evening performance at any quarter of the hour from eight to nine, and occasionally even earlier. Very few people live quite close to the theatres; most have to time themselves exactly according to the speed of the carriages, cabs, omnibuses, or trains in which they travel. Thus the exact hour of the performance is a matter of considerable moment. Now perhaps one ticket in thirty which comes into my hands as a dramatic critic contains the hour of the performance. I live too far from the theatre to be able to go and look at the placards outside the theatre doors; if I went, I should frequently find that the time was not mentioned even on these placards. I suppose, as a rule, people look at the advertisements in the newspapers. But I happen to take in no newspaper, and often do not see one for weeks together. Sometimes I buy an evening paper for the special purpose of finding out the time of a performance; only to find no advertisement of the theatre to which I have to go, or an advertisement which mentions everything but the time. It seems to me that it is part of the business of a theatre to print the time of performance on every ticket, and so self-evident a part of

## Suggestions to Managers.

its business that I cannot understand why it is not universally done.

Most theatres have by now abolished the old system of paying for programmes: should not that system be abolished in all theatres? As a rule a dramatic critic is not charged for his programme, and I am now speaking, not for myself, but for the general public. The unexpected demand for sixpence usually pulls up a man on his difficult and painful struggle to get around knees without treading on toes; it keeps him fumbling in his pocket, to the inconvenience of half a row of people, some of whom are standing to let him pass. But in the case of a lady it is worse. Two ladies who come to the theatre together have either come in a carriage, without thinking of bringing money with them, or else they have the exact cab fare home in the palm of their gloves. They have neither pockets nor purses. What can they do? They must go without a programme, because they have forgotten that the theatre to which they have come is one of the penny-wise and pound-foolish sort.

And now, having spoken for the public, let me speak for myself. The custom seems to me to be increasing of giving bad seats to the dramatic critics, or to all but those who represent the two or three most influential papers. I have never been able to understand the principle on which seats are distributed. A few theatres reserve the best seats of the first few rows of the stalls for the use of the critics; but in most of the theatres I am liable to be startled by the sight of Mr. Archer, let us say, in the back row, and some obscure person, whose name I cannot give because I do not

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know it, in the front row. Several theatres push back their stalls half way into the pit for a first night, and give the critics what are really no better than seats in the pit, while the better part of the theatre is filled with showy "paper." Now the opinion of the critics must be considered of some importance, or they would not be invited to attend ; and their opinion must to some extent depend on their comfort, on whether they have or have not to strain their eyes to see what is going on on the stage, and their ears to hear what is being said there. Is it not wise, as well as fair, to make the critic's task as pleasant to him as you can ? Remember that he does not come to the theatre for his pleasure, and that he is the only person in the audience who has to come alone.

A recent misadventure of Mr. Robert Newman, who has done so much for music in England, has set me thinking on the question of concert-giving, and I am convinced that two things are mainly responsible for the financial losses of concert-givers : one is that the seats are too expensive, and the other is, that the concerts are too long. Now a reform in one of these evils would lead necessarily to the reform of the other. Mr. Newman may say, "I am obliged to charge 15*s.* for a stall, or I cannot pay my orchestra its £200, and my soloists their various big prices." I would answer : No one can enjoy the whole of such concerts as you give ; cut them in two, charge half the price for each half, and instead of having a hall made up of empty seats and "paper," you will have every seat filled. In some of the East End theatres and music halls there are two performances an evening ; the performances are cheap and

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brief, and they are packed twice over. The East End has much to teach us. Let an afternoon be divided into two concerts, one following the other with a short interval, and neither longer than an hour, or an hour and a quarter. The first audience can have tea after its concert, the second audience can have tea before its concert. Neither audience will have a headache.

The fact is, that music cannot be listened to with any real enjoyment when it is listened to hour after hour in a heavy atmosphere. The ears listen mechanically, in a kind of stupor ; the brain ceases to follow ; you can no longer either criticise or enjoy. What we want is to have short concerts, and short concerts will bring with them what are rightly termed popular prices. Will not Mr. Newman or some other businesslike enthusiast try the experiment ?

## The Price of Realism.

MODERN staging, which has been carried in England to its highest point of excellence, professes to aim at beauty, and is, indeed, often beautiful in detail. But its real aim is not at the creation of beautiful pictures, in subordination to the words and actions of the play, but at supplementing words and actions by an exact imitation of real surroundings. Imitation, not creation, is its end, and in its attempt to imitate the general aspect of things it leads the way to the substitution of things themselves for perfectly satisfactory indications of them. "Real water" we have all heard of, and we know its place in the theatre; but this is only the simplest form of this anti-artistic endeavour to be real. Sir Henry Irving will use, for a piece of decoration meant to be seen only from a distance, a garland of imitation flowers, exceedingly well done, costing perhaps two pounds, where two or three brushes of paint would have supplied its place more effectively. When d'Annunzio's "*Francesca da Rimini*" was put on the stage in Rome, a pot of basil was brought daily from Naples in order that it might be laid on the window-sill of the room in which Francesca and Paolo read of Lancelot and Guinevere. In an interview published in one of the English papers, d'Annunzio declared that he had all his stage decorations made in precious metal by fine craftsmen, and that he had done this for an artistic purpose, and not only for the beauty of the things themselves. The gesture, he said, of the actor who lifts to his lips a cup of finely-wrought gold will be finer, more sincere, than that of the actor who uses a gilded "property."

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If so, I can but answer, the actor is no actor, but an amateur. The true actor walks in a world as real in its unreality as that which surrounds the poet or the enthusiast. The bare boards, chairs, and T-light, in the midst of which he rehearses, are as significantly palaces or meadows to him, while he speaks his lines and lives himself into his character, as all the real grass and real woodwork with which the manager will cumber the stage on the first night. As little will he need to distinguish between the gilt and the gold cup as between the imaginary characters who surround him, and his mere friends and acquaintances who are speaking for them.

This costly and inartistic aim at reality, then, is the vice of the modern stage, and, at its best or worst, can it be said that it is really even when it pretends to be : a perfectly deceptive imitation of a real thing ? I said once, to clinch an argument against it, by giving it its full possible credit, that the modern staging can give you the hour of the day and the corner of the country with precise accuracy. But can it ? Has the most gradual of stage-moons ever caught the miraculous lunar trick to the life ? Has the real hedge-row ever brought a breath of the country upon the stage ? I do not think so, and meanwhile, we have been trying our hardest to persuade ourselves that it is so, instead of abandoning ourselves to a new, strange atmosphere, to the magic of the play itself.

When, on many occasions, I have praised Mr. Gordon Craig's staging of "Acis and Galatea," "Dido and Aeneas," and "The Masque of Love," for its beauty, suggestion, and novel audacities, I have said a great deal.

## On Musical Criticism.

LAST week, one of the *Academy's* essayists in little found himself wondering why there were so few instructive and delightful books about music, why, as a rule, or even as an exception, there was so little instructive and delightful musical criticism. But I think "M. M. B." exaggerates. "Why," he laments, "is there so much written that is interesting concerning books and writers, art and artists, science and scientists, and so little appealing to the music-lover or helping him in his art?" Now it seems to me that, in spite of the fact that music is much more difficult to write about than any of the other arts, a great deal that is both interesting and valuable has been written about music, not only from a technical but from a general point of view. Wagner's prose writings present us with a body of theory concerning his art such as few poets or painters have ever given us concerning theirs. Indeed, I think we can find a parallel only in the writings of Leonardo da Vinci and Sir Joshua Reynolds on the one hand, and of Goethe and Coleridge on the other. Then, among musicians, there was Schumann, who edited musical papers and wrote the main part of them; who wrote, indeed, in only too literary a way, but always with an eager and watchful insight, which was rarely deceived, ready to discover a new genius before that genius had really discovered himself. Liszt wrote with voluminous and flowing eloquence, as in his book on Chopin; Berlioz was a musical critic for thirty years, besides writing one of the most delightful and quite the most exhilarating of auto-biographies; Saint-Saëns, Bruneau, Vincent d'Indy, most

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indeed of the contemporary French composers, have written musical criticism, always in an attractive as well as a sound and serious way. Gluck, who anticipated Wagner in his music, anticipated him also in a theoretical preface which sets forth very much the ideas which Wagner was afterwards to develop. Then in regard to the musicians who have written nothing for the public, how much splendid incidental criticism do we not find in the letters which their biographers have printed after their death ! For my part I know hardly any biographical literature so full, various, and entertaining as the biographies of musicians. Few musicians have not had at least one good biographer. And, as a matter of interest, I contend that Grove's "Dictionary of Musicians" is as good a companion for a wet day in the country as any volume of Larousse or of the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

"The musical papers," says "M. M. B.," "fall far short of their possibilities, and few critics are capable of really illuminative articles." No doubt ; but remember that while everybody, in a certain sense, can write about literature, only musicians, or those who have made a special study of music, can write about music, and a good musician is much better employed in writing music. Think of the ecstasy with which Berlioz, when at last he had made a little money by his "Troyens," gave up his post on the *Débats* ! "At last," he cries in his autobiography, "after thirty years' bondage, I am free ! No more *feuilletons* to write, no more commonplaces to excuse, no more mediocrities to praise, no more indignation to suppress ; no more lies, no more comedies, no more mean compromises—I am free !" And

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he gravely writes down : “*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.*”

The reason why music is so much more difficult to write about than any other art, is because music is the one absolutely disembodied art, when it is heard, and no more than a proposition of Euclid, when it is written. It is wholly useless, to the student no less than to the general reader, to write about music in the style of the programmes for which we pay sixpence at the concerts. “Repeated by flute and oboe, with accompaniment for clarionet (in triplets) and strings *pizzicoto*, and then worked up by the full orchestra, this melody is eventually allotted to the ‘cellos, its accompaniment now taking the form of chromatic passages,” and so forth. Not less useless is it to write a rhapsody which has nothing to do with the notes, and to present this as an interpretation of what the notes have said in an unknown language. Yet what method is there besides these two methods? None, indeed, that can ever be wholly satisfactory; at the best, no more than a compromise.

In writing about poetry, while precisely that quality which makes it poetry must always evade expression, there yet remain the whole definite meaning of the words, and the whole easily explicable technique of the verse, which can be made clear to every reader. In painting, you have the subject of the picture, and you have the colour, handling, and the like, which can be expressed hardly less precisely in words. But music has no subject, outside itself; no meaning, outside its meaning as music; and, to understand anything of what is meant by its technique, a certain definite technical know-

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ledge is necessary in the reader. What subterfuges are required, in order to give the vaguest suggestion of what a piece of music is like, and how little has been said, after all, beyond generalisation, which would apply equally to half a dozen different pieces! The composer himself, if you ask him, will tell you that you may be quite correct in what you say, but that he has no opinion in the matter.

Music has indeed a language, but it is a language in which birds and other angels may talk, but out of which we cannot translate their meaning. Emotion itself, how changed becomes even emotion when we transport it into a new world, in which only sound has feeling! But I am putting it as if it had died and been re-born there, whereas it was born in its own region, and is wholly ignorant of ours.

Now is there not some reason why musical criticism is not always "illuminative," "instructive," or "delightful"? Is it not, on the other hand, surprising that so much valuable writing about music does exist? Of music as music, perhaps no one has really written; but theory and anecdote, these remain, and when Berlioz writes it, even a treatise on instrumentation can become as interesting as a fairy-tale.

## The Meiningen Orchestra.

OTHER orchestras give performances, readings, approximations ; the Meiningen orchestra gives an interpretation, that is, the thing itself. When this orchestra plays a piece of music every note lives, and not, as with most orchestras, every particularly significant note. Brahms is sometimes dull, but he is never dull when these people play him ; Schubert is sometimes tame, but not when they play him. What they do is precisely to put vitality into even those parts of a composition in which it is scarcely present, or scarcely realisable ; and that is a much more difficult thing, and really a more important thing, for the proper appreciation of music, than the heightening of what is already fine, and obviously fine in itself. And this particular quality of interpretation has its value too as criticism. For, while it gives the utmost value to what is implicitly there, there at least in embryo, it cannot create out of nothing ; it cannot make insincere work sincere, or fill empty work with meaning which never could have belonged to it. Brahms, at his moments of least vitality, comes into a new vigour of life ; but Strauss, played by these sincere, precise, thoughtful musicians shows, as he never could show otherwise, the distance at which his lively spectre stands from life. When I heard the "Don Juan" which I had heard twice before, and liked less the second time than the first, I realised finally the whole strain, pretence, and emptiness of the thing. Played with this earnest attention to the meaning of every note, it was like a trivial drama when Duse acts it ; it went to pieces through being

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taken at its own word. It was as if a threadbare piece of stuff were held up to the full sunlight ; you saw every stitch that was wanting.

The "Don Juan" was followed by the Entr'acte and Ballet music from "Rosamunde," and here the same sunlight was no longer criticism, but rather an illumination. I have never heard any music more beautifully played. I could only think of the piano playing of Pachmann. The faint, delicate music just came into existence, breathed a little, and was gone. Here for once was an orchestra which could literally be overheard. The overture to the "Meistersinger" followed, and here, for the first time, I got, quite flawless and uncontradictory, the two impressions which that piece presents to one simultaneously. I heard the unimpeded march forward, and I distinguished at the same time every delicate impediment thronging the way. Some renderings give you a sense of solidity and straightforward movement ; others of the elaborate and various life which informs this so solid structure. Here one got the complete thing, completely rendered.

I could not say the same of the rendering of the overture to "Tristan." Here the notes, all that was so to speak merely musical in the music, were given their just expression ; but the something more, the vast heave and throb of the music, was not there. It was a "classical" rendering of what is certainly not "classical" music. Hear that overture as Richter gives it, and you will realise just where the Meiningen orchestra is lacking. It has the kind of energy which is required to render Beethoven's multitudinous energy, or the energy which can be heavy and cloudy in

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Brahms, or like overpowering light in Bach, or, in Wagner himself, an energy which works within known limits, as in the overture to the "Meistersinger." But that wholly new, and somewhat feverish, overwhelming quality which we find in the music of "Tristan" meets with something less than the due response. It is a quality which people used to say was not musical at all, a quality which does not appeal certainly to the musical sense alone : for the rendering of that we must go to Richter.

Otherwise, in that third concert, it would be difficult to say whether Schumann, Brahms, Mozart, or Beethoven was the better rendered. Perhaps one might choose Mozart for pure pleasure. It was the "Serenade" for wind instruments, and it seemed, played thus perfectly, the most delightful music in the world. The music of Mozart is, no doubt, the most beautiful music in the world. When I heard the serenade I thought of Coventry Patmore's epithet, actually used, I think, about Mozart : "glittering peace." Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, and Beethoven all seemed for the moment to lose a little of their light under this pure and tranquil and unwavering "glitter." I hope I shall never hear the "Serenade" again, for I shall never hear it played as these particular players played it.

The Meiningen orchestra is famous for its wind, and when, at the first concert, I heard Beethoven's Rondino for wind instruments, it seemed to me that I was hearing brass for the first time as I had imagined brass ought to sound. Here was, not so much a new thing which one had never thought possible, as that precise thing which one's ears had expected, and waited for, and never heard. One quite

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miraculous thing these wind players certainly did, in common, however, with the whole orchestra. And that was to give an effect of distance, as if the sound came actually from beyond the walls. I noticed it first in the overture to "Lenore," the first piece which they played; an unparalleled effect and one of surprising beauty.

Another matter for which the Meiningen orchestra is famous is its interpretation of the works of Brahms. At each concert some fine music of Brahms was given finely, but it was not until the fourth concert that I realised, on hearing the third Symphony, everything of which Brahms was capable. It may be that a more profound acquaintance with his music would lead me to add other things to this thing as the finest music which he ever wrote; but the third Symphony certainly revealed to me, not altogether a new, but a complete Brahms. It had all his intellect and something more; thought had taken fire, and become a kind of passion.

## The New Bayreuth.

In order to hear and see Wagner as Wagner wished to be heard and seen it is no longer necessary to make the pilgrimage to Bayreuth. There is now a new Bayreuth at Munich, and at Munich one is not thrown so entirely on one's own resources as at Bayreuth. One can spend the morning at the Old Pinakothek with either Rubens or Botticelli; or at the Glyptothek among the marbles of Aegina, as if among young children of the gods; or even at that "Secession" exhibition, which can hardly be neglected by an observer of the modern German as he is and as he would be. Then, at half-past three, one drives up the winding hill of the Gasteig to the square, plain, grey and green Prinz-Regenten-Theater, which is an improved copy of the theatre at Bayreuth, with exactly the same amphitheatrical arrangement of seats, the same invisible orchestra, the same vast stage, set far back, the same entrances, the same system of numbering the seats and the cloak-room seats on a single ticket. Inside, the house is built of grey stone, with, in the main, simple decorations in gold and green, but with a hideous pictorial roof, like the roof of a hotel dining-room. There is a restaurant, opening out of the circular corridor which runs round the building, and, opening out of the restaurant, a square garden, green and white, which, under either sunlight or electric light, is like a garden in a picture.

Everything is done as at Bayreuth: there are even the three "fanfaren" at the doors; there is the same punctual and irrevocable closing of the doors at the beginning of

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each act. There are about 300 fewer seats in the theatre, and the seats are a little more comfortable, though one realises, after a few hours, that wood was not meant for sitting on in its natural state. The solemnity of the whole thing makes one almost nervous, for the first few minutes of each act ; but, after that, how near one is, in this perfectly darkened, perfectly quiet theatre, in which the music surges up out of the “mystic gulf,” and the picture exists in all the ecstasy of a picture on the other side of it, beyond reality, how near one is to being alone, in the passive state in which the flesh is able to endure the great burdening and uplifting of vision ! There are now two theatres in the world in which music and drama can be absorbed, and not merely guessed at. That this second one exists is due largely to the persistent energy of Herr von Possart, Intendant of the Royal Bavarian Theatres, and to the liberality of the Prince-Regent, who is continuing the great tradition of the mad king of genius, Ludwig II., to whom Wagner owed so much in his lifetime. I think we should forgive Herr von Possart for his rendering of “Enoch Arden” in German, to the too literal music of Richard Strauss, on that recent, unsuccessful visit to London. He has done a great work here in Munich, and all Europe should be grateful to him.

I reached Munich in time to hear the two last performances of the series, “Tristan” and “Die Meistersinger”; the former under Herr Franz Fischer, the latter under Herr Hermann Zumpe. The orchestra, perhaps especially in “Tristan,” and the voices and chorus in “Die Meistersinger,” were equal to anything I have ever heard in a

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theatre ; and Herr Lautenschläger's staging was quite the best of its kind I have ever seen. "Tristan" was glorified by Ternina, who is both a great singer and a fine actress, profoundly passionate as both ; but the other singers, though good, were not so good as others I have heard. But in "Die Meistersinger" every singer seemed to be exactly suited to the part, and every singer was excellent. Herr Knoté, with his great, vivid voice, seemed Walther himself, and Herr Feinhals the actual Hans Sachs. Herr Geis was an admirable Beckmesser ; Frl. Kloboth did charmingly all that was to be done with Eva. And the music, as it rose out of the depths, came, in "Tristan," wave after wave, breaking and rebounding, in "Die Meistersinger" like the weaving of a great loom, in patterns of delicate sound ; music in which one heard the great sweep and snap of the strings, and the voice of every wind, each distinct, if one listened for it, and all swept together into a single army, marching victoriously. Beyond this insurgent host, with its cries and cannons, its armour and waving flags, moves the picture, which at times reminded me of a Dürer, as in the group of sailors on Tristan's ship, when Brangaene draws aside the curtain ; it was always a German picture, with brilliant colours, vivid effects, and an amazing reality in its buildings, rippling seas, costumes, moonlight and sunlight. If we are to have realism on the stage, let it be done as it is done here, so completely, so unobtrusively, with such excellent taste and knowledge. I did not like the rippling sea in the third act of "Tristan," but it was at least better done than I have ever seen it done. In "Die Meistersinger" the crowd at the end, and the apprentices' fight in the second

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act, made all the attempts of Mr. Tree seem puny and ineffectual. Here, better than at Bayreuth, was the typical modern staging done perfectly ; it gave one a certain kind of picture, with all the difference that exists, in painting itself, between good and bad art, if one compares it with the best English and French staging. And, above all, it was significant, it all meant something, it all helped to bring out Wagner's meaning.

It is only when Wagner is done in his own way that we can realise exactly what it is that he has achieved in art. Here, undoubtedly, was unity of effect, and, here, it could not be said that any one art interfered with any other art. The music, as in Nietzsche's interpretation, was the "Dionysiac" element, the vital principle ; the rest was the picture, the human illusion, which the music held back into its place, on the other side of the gulf. As I sat in this grave and discreet theatre, I thought with horror of the whole aspect of things at Covent Garden : the house, constructed for fashionable display, with its light, noise, and disturbance ; the emphatic orchestra, incapable of either delicacy or precision, playing the music all in italics and capitals ; the pinched and gaudy staging, the ludicrous costumes, the scarecrow and crow-voiced chorus, the one or two star singers ; the mangled scores, which must be got through between dinner and midnight. When shall we have a theatre in London which one can mention on the same page with the Prinz-Regenten-Theater in Munich ?

## Mozart in the Mirabell-Garten.

THEY are giving a cycle of Mozart operas at Munich, at the Hof-Theater, to follow the Wagner operas at the Prinz-Regenten-Theater; and I stayed, on my way to Salzburg, to hear "Die Zauberflöte." It was perfectly given, with a small, choice orchestra under Herr Zumpe, and with every part except the tenor's admirably sung and acted. Herr Julius Zarest, from Hanover, was particularly good as Papageno; the Eva of "Die Meistersinger" made an equally good Pamina. And it was staged, under Herr von Possart's direction, as suitably and as successfully, in its different way, as the Wagner opera had been. The sombre Egyptian scenes of this odd story, with its menagerie and its pantomime transformation, were turned into a thrilling spectacle, and by means of nothing but a little canvas and paint and limelight. It could have cost very little, compared with an English Shakespeare revival, let us say; but how infinitely more spectacular, in the good sense, it was! Every effect was significant, perfectly in its place, doing just what it had to do, and without thrusting itself forward for separate admiration. German art of to-day is all decorative, and it is at its best when it is applied to the scenery of the stage. Its fault, in serious painting, is that it is too theatrical, it is too anxious to be full of too many qualities besides the qualities of good painting. It is too emphatic, it is meant for artificial light. If Franz Stuck would paint for the stage, instead of using his vigorous brush to paint nature without distinction and nightmares without imagination on easel-canvases, he would

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do, perhaps rather better, just what these scene-painters do, with so much skill and taste. They have the sense of effective decoration; and German art, at present, is almost wholly limited to that sense.

I listened, with the full consent of my eyes, to the lovely music, which played round the story like light transfiguring a masquerade; and now, by a lucky chance, I can brood over it here in Salzburg, where Mozart was born, where he lived, where the house in which he wrote the opera is to be seen, a little garden-house brought over from Vienna and set down where it should always have been, high up among the pine-woods of the Capuzinerberg. I find myself wondering how much Mozart took to himself, how much went to his making, in this exquisite place, set in a hollow of great hills, from which, if you look down upon it, it has the air of a little toy town out of a Noah's Ark, set square in a clean, trim, perfectly flat map of meadows, with its flat roofs, packed close together on each side of a long, winding river, which trails across the whole breadth of the plain. From the midst of the town you look up everywhere at heights; rocks covered with pine-trees, beyond them hills hooded with white clouds, great soft walls of darkness, on which the mist is like the bloom of a plum; and, right above you, the castle, on its steep rock swathed in trees, with its grey walls and turrets, like the castle which one has imagined for all the knights of all the romances. All this, no doubt, entered into the soul of Mozart, and had its meaning for him; but where I seem actually to see him, where I can fancy him walking most often, and hearing more sounds than elsewhere come to him through his eyes

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and his senses, is the Mirabell-Garten, which lies behind the palace built by an Archbishop of Salzburg in the seventeenth century, and which is laid out in the conventional French fashion, with a harmony that I find in few other gardens. I have never walked in a garden which seemed to keep itself so reticently within its own severe and gracious limits. The trees themselves seem to grow naturally into the pattern of this garden, with its formal alleys, in which the birds fly in and out of the trellised roofs, its square-cut bushes, its low stone balustrades, its tall urns out of which droop trails of pink and green, its round flower-beds, each of a single colour, set at regular intervals on the grass, its tiny fountain dripping faintly into a green and brown pool ; the long, sad lines of the Archbishop's Palace, off which the brown paint is peeling ; the whole sad charm, dainty melancholy, formal beauty, and autumnal air of it. It was in the Mirabell-Garten that I seemed nearest to Mozart.

The music of Mozart, as one hears it in "Die Zauberflöte," is music without desire, music content with beauty, and to be itself. It has the firm outlines of Dürer or of Botticelli, with the same constraint within a fixed form, if one compares it with the Titian-like freedom and splendour of Wagner. In hearing Mozart I saw Botticelli's "Entombment," which I had been seeing in the Munich Gallery ; in hearing Wagner I had seen the Titian "Scourging of Christ." Mozart has what Coventry Patmore called "a glittering peace" : to Patmore that quality distinguished supreme art, and, indeed, the art of Mozart is, in its kind, supreme. It has an adorable purity of form, and it has no need to look outside those limits which it has found or fixed for itself.

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Mozart cares little, as a rule, for what he has to express ; but he cares infinitely for the way in which he expresses everything, and, through the mere emotional power of the notes themselves, he conveys to us all that he cares to convey : awe, for instance, in those solemn scenes of the priests of Isis. He is a magician, who plays with his magic, and can be gay, out of mere pleasant idleness, fooling with Papagenus as Shakespeare fools in "Twelfth Night." "Die Zauberflöte" is really a very fine kind of pantomime, to which the music lends itself in the spirit of the thing, yet without condescending to be grotesque. The duet of Papagenus and Papagena is absolutely comic, but it is as lovely as a duet of two birds, of less flaming feather. As the lovers ascend through fires and floods, only the piping of the magic flute is heard in the orchestra : imagine Wagner threading it into the web of a great orchestral pattern ! For Mozart it was enough, and, for his art, it was enough. He gives you harmony which does not need to mean anything outside itself, in order to be supremely beautiful ; and he gives you beauty with a certain exquisite formality, not caring to go beyond the lines which contain that reticent, sufficient charm of the Mirabell-Garten.

## An Apology for Puppets.

AFTER seeing a ballet, a farce, and the fragment of an opera performed by the marionettes at the Costanzi Theatre in Rome, I am inclined to ask myself why we require the intervention of any less perfect medium between the meaning of a piece, as the author conceived it, and that other meaning which it derives from our reception of it. The living actor, even when he condescends to subordinate himself to the requirements of pantomime, has always what he is proud to call his temperament ; in other words, so much personal caprice, which for the most part means wilful misunderstanding ; and in seeing his acting you have to consider this intrusive little personality of his as well as the author's. The marionette may be relied upon. He will respond to an indication without reserve or revolt ; an error on his part (we are all human) will certainly be the fault of the author ; he can be trained to perfection. As he is painted, so will he smile ; as the wires lift or lower his hands, so will his gestures be ; and he will dance when his legs are set in motion.

Seen at a distance, the puppets cease to be an amusing piece of mechanism, imitating real people ; there is no difference. I protest that the Knight who came in with his plumed hat, his shining sword, and flung back his long cloak with so fine a sweep of the arm, was exactly the same to me as if he had been a living actor, dressed in the same clothes, and imitating the gesture of a knight ; and that the contrast of what was real, as we say, under the fiction appears to me less ironical in the former than in the latter.

## An Apology for Puppets.

We have to allow, you will admit, at least as much to the beneficent heightening of travesty, if we have ever seen the living actor in the morning, not yet shaved, standing at the bar, his hat on one side, his mouth spreading in that abandonment to laughter which has become, from the necessity of his profession, a natural trick ; oh, much more, I think, than if we merely come upon an always decorative, never an obtrusive, costumed figure, leaning against the wall, nonchalantly enough, in a corner of the coulisses.

To sharpen our sense of what is illusive in the illusion of the puppets, let us sit not too far from the stage. Choosing our place carefully, we shall have the satisfaction of always seeing the wires at their work, while I think we shall lose nothing of what is most savoury in the feast of the illusion. There is not indeed the appeal to the senses of the first row of the stalls at a ballet of living dancers. But is not that a trifle too obvious a sentiment for the true artist in artificial things ? Why leave the ball-room ? It is not nature that one looks for on the stage in this kind of spectacle, and our excitement in watching it should remain purely intellectual. If you prefer that other kind of illusion, go a little further away, and, I assure you, you will find it quite easy to fall in love with a marionette. I have seen the most adorable heads, with real hair too, among the wooden dancers of a theatre of puppets ; faces which might easily, with but a little of that good-will which goes to all falling in love, seem the answer to a particular dream, making all other faces in the world but spoilt copies of this inspired piece of painted wood.

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But the illusion, to a more scrupulous taste, will consist simply in that complication of view which allows us to see wood and wire imitating an imitation, and which delights us less when seen at what is called the proper distance, where the two are indistinguishable, than when seen from just the point where all that is crudely mechanical hides the comedy of what is, absolutely, a deception. Loosing, as we do, something of the particularity of these painted faces, we are able to enjoy all the better what it is certainly important we should appreciate, if we are truly to appreciate our puppets. This is nothing less than a fantastic, yet a direct, return to the masks of the Greeks ; that learned artifice by which tragedy and comedy were assisted in speaking to the world with the universal voice, by this deliberate generalising of emotion. It will be a lesson to some of our modern notions ; and it may be instructive for us to consider that we could not give a play of Ibsen's to marionettes, but that we could give them the "Agamemnon."

Above all, for we need it above all, let the marionettes remind us that the art of the theatre should be beautiful first, and then indeed what you will afterwards. Gesture on the stage is the equivalent of rhythm in verse, and it can convey, as a perfect rhythm should, not a little of the inner meaning of words, a meaning perhaps more latent in things. Does not gesture indeed make emotion, more certainly and more immediately than emotion makes gesture ? You may feel and you may suppress emotion ; but assume a smile, lifted eyebrows, a clenched fist, and it is impossible for you not to assume along with the gesture, if but for a

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moment, the emotion to which that gesture corresponds. In our marionettes, then, we get personified gesture, and the gesture, like all other forms of emotion, generalised. The appeal in what seems to you these childish manœuvrers is to a finer, because to a more intimately poetic, sense of things than the merely rationalistic appeal of very modern plays. If at times we laugh, it is with wonder at seeing humanity so gay, heroic, and untiring. There is the romantic suggestion of magic in this beauty.

Maeterlinck wrote on the title-page of one of his volumes "Drames pour marionnettes," no doubt to intimate his sense of the symbolic value, in the interpretation of a profound inner meaning, of that external nullity which the marionette by its very nature emphasises. And so I find my puppets, where the extremes meet, ready to interpret not only the "Agamemnon," but "La Mort de Tintagiles"; for the soul, which is to make, we may suppose, the drama of the future, is content with as simple a mouth-piece as Fate and the great passions, which were the classic drama.

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